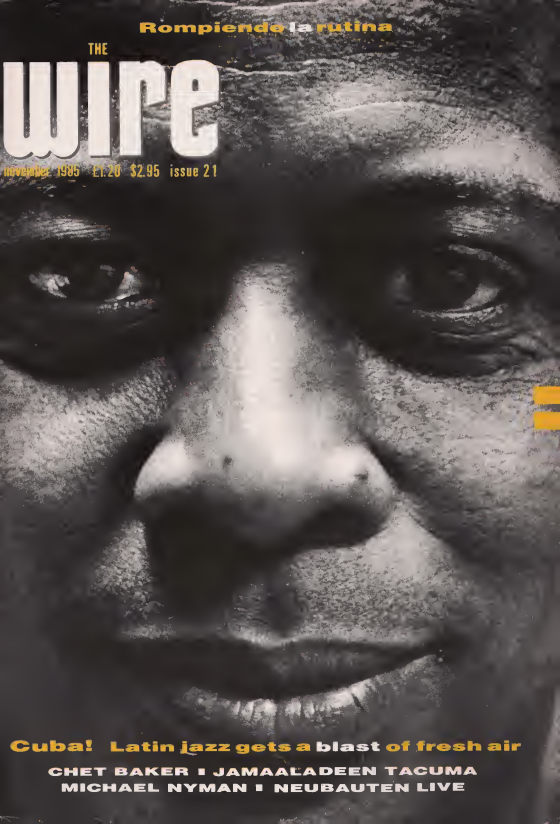


Rompiendo la rutina

THE

wire

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Cuba! Latin jazz gets a blast of fresh air

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EVERY WEDNESDAY 45p.

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COVER PHOTO: Chucho Valdes by
 Four Eyes

NEWS

an editor's idea

WELCOME BACK, my friends, to the magazine that never ends. And welcome also to our new advertising and promotions manager Joanne Harris, whose drive and vision are set to lift *The Wire* to ever greater heights of success (hyperbolic raves – I got a million of 'em).

Meantime, we have switched premises: our luxurious new nerve centre is sited in the desirable surroundings of Cleveland Street – the full address is Units G & H, 115 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5PN. Phone number for the world is 01-580 7522. For interstellar links – we're working on it (like Anthony Braxton).

Many of you will have seen *The Wire* looking perfectly cool in newsgazettes and on bookstalls nationwide of late. Our new distribution deal means that we're more easily available than ever before – while retaining the hardest magazine on the stands. If you still can't get a regular copy, let us know. We're well-spoken with the people who sell you your literature.

Richard Cook

howard tells you how

GUITARIST HOWARD Roberts (through the auspices of Jazzcentre North) is holding a guitar seminar at the Coconut Grove Club, Mernon Street, Leeds on 5, 6 and 7 of November.

the wire photo exhibition

THE WIRE is pleased to announce a nationwide Photography Exhibition incorporating a selection of the best Jazz and related images, taken by Britain's most renowned music photographers – including Anton Corbijn, Nick White and Peter Anderson to name but three.

The Exhibition will commence at London's eminent Bass Clef club (for the month of November) and proceed around Britain, Scotland and Wales until March 1986.

We will be coming to a venue near you – so check out our December issue for details.



Lowell Fulson

lowell fulson: blues on the road

GREAT US bluesman Lowell Fulson concludes a UK tour this month with the following dates: Newcastle Corner House (28), Manchester Band On The Wall (30), Southampton New Bridge Inn (31), Putney Half Moon (1 Nov), Belfast Queens University (2) and London 100 Club (3).



gil scott-heron in major autumn tour

GIL SCOTT-HERON and his band Amere Facade will be administering their brand of message-bearing funk in an extensive UK tour this autumn. The visit opens with a week-long engagement at London's Ronnie Scott Club from 21–26 October, and continues at Colchester Essex University (1 Nov), Leicester Poly (2), Croydon Fairfield Hall (3), Brighton Poly (4), Bradford University (6), Warwick University (7), Edinburgh Queens Hall (8), Liverpool University (9), Salford University (10), Norwich UEA (13), Kentish Town Forum (14) and Woolwich Coronet (15). Two further dates are to be confirmed. An appearance on *Whistle Test* has also been lined up for 5 November.

belfast beanfeast

THE BELFAST Festival runs from 6–23 November and includes a huge variety of shows – in which folk and jazz music also play a part. For all details ring the Festival on 0232 6040 for a free programme.

howard riley's facets

PIANIST HOWARD Riley leads a new group called Facets – featuring Evan Parker, Barry Guy, John Stevens, Jeff Clyne and Tony Levin – in a brief nationwide tour later this month. Dates include London Donmar Warehouse (24 Nov), Colchester Essex University (25), Stockton Dovecot Arts Centre (26), Manchester Band On The Wall (28), Liverpool Bluecoat Gallery (29), Exeter Arts Centre (30), Bristol TBC (1 December).

towner/abercrombie: five dates

THE GUITAR duo of Ralph Towner and John Abercrombie have confirmed five dates in Scotland as part of a November European visit. They are: Dundee Bonner Hall (12), Aberdeen (venue to be confirmed) (13), Inverness Cummings Hotel (14), Edinburgh Queens Hall (15) and Glasgow Mitchell Theatre (16).

happy end

BIG BAND funsters Happy End are on the road this month (in 17 coaches, we presume): Birmingham Art Lab (1 Nov), Brighton Zap Club (2), London Acklam Hall (7), Cricklewold Hotel (8) and Norwich Jazz Festival (14). We review their new LP *There's Nothing Quite Like Money* next month!



Shirley Clarke

jazz at the LFF

IN THE 'hood of great cinema that is this year's London Film Festival, three music films are of particular interest to discerning buffs. *Survivors The Blues Today* (showing on 16 Nov at the NFT) is a performance movie made at a three-day blues fest in St Paul, Minnesota, last year. Shirley Clarke (who made *The Connection*) has made a study of Ornette Coleman called *Omlette: Made in America*, screening on 27 Nov at the Everyman Cinema; and Brigitte Berman, who made *Bix*, has her picture *Artie Shaw: Time Is All You've Got* shown at the NFT on 1 December.

Call the NFT box office on 01-437 4355 for further details.

back door open up again

FULL DATES have now been announced for the return tour by Back Door, the fusion power trio of the mid-seventies who pioneered the more interesting strain of homegrown jazz-rock.

The complete list of gigs is: Nottingham Old Vic Tavern (30 Oct), Swindon Link Centre (31 Oct), Bristol (venue to be confirmed) (1 Nov), Exeter Arts Centre (2 Nov), Birmingham Strathallan Hotel (3), Newcastle Corner House Hotel (4,5), Sheffield Leadmill (6), Manchester Band On The Wall (7), Lancaster Nuffield Theatre Studio (8), Leeds Trade Club (9), Hull Spring Street Theatre (10), London The Fringe (11), Liverpool Unity Theatre (13), Stockton Dovecot Arts Centre (14), Norwich Premises (15), Southampton Solent Suite (16), Derby Brownes Bar (17).

bluecoat gallery stuns liverpool

WELL, THEY ought to with an adventurous programme involving "new art in every form". An outstanding series of upcoming gigs in these splendid surroundings includes the Pat Crumley Sextet (25 Oct), Electronic Music Now (31), Gemini (10), 3 PVD & the Burn/Butcher Duo (14), Gary Boyle & John Etheridge Band (20) and Howard Riley's Facets (29). Coming soon: Tony Oxley, Didier Levalet, Elton Dean and Lol Coxhill. Tickets are £3.50 (£1.75 concessions).

new jazz in clubland

TWO NEW regular jazz-oriented club nights have opened in London. The Hot House swelters every Friday at The Albany Empire, Douglas Way SE6 - live bands and top DJs playing jazz, Latin and African. 11 pm start and £2 (plus membership) admission.

Every Wednesday at The Store, Take Five happens from 10.30. £3.50 gets you in and drinks are £1 all night. Jazz, South American, R&B and other sounds. It's at 28a Leicester Square.

... and new Music in Nottingham

AT THE Newcastle Arms, 8.30 till 11 every Thursday, there's a "Recommended Night" with music from Recommended Records and other interesting improvised-type fringes.

3 pvd 2 or

GOOD HEADLINE, eh? It's for the tour by improvising trio 3 PVD (Phil Durant, Paul Hession and Parny Wallace), which comprises: London Musicians Collective (15), Liverpool Bluecoat Society of Arts (16), Manchester Poly (20), Hull Ferens Art Gallery (21), Leeds Temple Club (22), Sheffield Other Musics (24), Kendall Brewery Arts Centre (27), Norwich Premises Arts Centre (28).

more jazz on the air

ANYONE NEAR what used to be called a "wireless" on Wednesday lunchtimes will be able to hear some jazz on Radio 3. Distinguished Wire contributor Max Hamson is currently presenting a series of programmes going under the title *Essential Jazz Records*, based on selections from the book of the same name; this runs until 20 November, when Charles Fox (another eminent Wire man) takes over the slot with a series of five programmes of records by Jelly Roll Morton - which itself follows on from a special profile presented by Charles entitled *Mr Jelly Roll*, including interviews with many who knew and worked with Morton. This goes out on 25 November. Max returns to the Wednesday slot (1.05 pm) with five more *Essential* programmes starting on 1 January.

aladar pege

THE ALADAR Pege Quartet play at Edinburgh Queens Hall (1 Nov), Aberdeen Simpsons (3), Glasgow Third Eye Centre (15), and Norwich Jazz Festival (7).



Anthony

braxton

WIRE FAVOURITE Anthony Braxton brings his Quartet over for an Arts Council tour this month. The dates are: London Bloomsbury Theatre (13 Nov), Newcastle People's Theatre (14), Manchester Operat Theatre (15), Birmingham Strathallan Theatre (17), Liverpool Everyman Theatre (18), Sheffield Leadmill (19), Leicester Poly (20), Bristol Arncliffe (21), Southampton Guildhall (22), Leeds Civic Theatre (24), Huddersfield Poly (25), Coventry Warwick University (26).



Back Door's Colin Hodgkinson

club dates

NOTTINGHAM, THE HIPPO, 43 BRIDLES-MITH GATE: Geno Washington (14), Art Farmer (28).

MANCHESTER BAND ON THE WALL: Gary Boyle/John Etheridge (21).

BARBICAN CENTRE: Sweet & Sour Jazz (3), Lloyd Ryan Quartet (10), Gaoft Castle Quartet/M Division (17) (lunchtime sessions), EYPE, EYEMOUTH HOTEL: Sphere (14), SHEFFIELD GRAPES INN, TRIPLET LANE: Alan Tomlinson/Paul Rodgers/Roger Turner (3), 3 PVD (24).

PECKHAM WALMER CASTLE: Gail Thompson Quartet (26 Oct), Kalabash (27), Red Rodney (28).

NEWCASTLE CORNER HOUSE: Louis Stewart/Martin Taylor Duo (19), John Etheridge-Gary Boyle Band (26).

LONDON BASS CLEF: Blue Note Revisited (27 Oct), Mari Wilson (29), Jim Mullen Quartet (30), Jazz Turbo (31).

UPSTAIRS AT HARRYS, APPROACH TAVERN E8: Gail Thompson's Lump Sum (30 Oct), Melanie Harrold (6 Nov), The Fungheites (1), The Jumpin Jehosaphats (20), Gdanskys Bandsky (27).

CAMBRIDGE MAN ON THE MOON, NORFOLK STREET: Alan Skidmore (1 Nov), Gill Alexander Quartet (8), Gail Thompson Quartet (15), Fay Weldon/Nick Weldon Band (22), Lou Donaldson (29).

BULLS HEAD, LONDON: Duncan Lamont Big Band (27 Oct), Mundell Lowe/Jiggs Whigham (28), Tony Lee Trio (29), John Etheridge & Friends (30), Hexad (31).

BIRMINGHAM, ASTON UNIVERSITY ARTS CENTRE: The Harmonic Band (30 Oct).

SOUTHEAST DICKENS, HIGH STREET: Eddie Thompson Trio with Roy Williams (6).



Mari Wilson

QUARTET BOOKS

● SELECTED JAZZ TITLES ●

RUSSIAN JAZZ: NEW IDENTITY – Leo Feigin (ed)

The first major survey of the new improvised music of the Soviet Union, documenting what Feigin refers to as 'an incredible explosion' of musical activity. Contributors include S. Frederick Starr (author of *Red & Hot*); Efim Barban, doyen of the new music's apologists; Norman Weinstein, US critic and poet; John Fordham of *The Guardian* and many more... 'One of the most important jazz stories of the decade and ... one of the most compelling human stories of our time' (Francis Davis, *Down Beat*). (Illustrated hb £12.95 0 7043 2506 3)

UNFINISHED DREAM: THE MUSICAL WORLD OF RED CALLENDER – Red Callender with Elaine Cohen

The autobiography of one of this century's most prolific and exciting jazz musicians, who has played with every jazz great: Louis Armstrong, Lester Young, Duke Ellington, Billie Holiday, Charlie Parker, Art Tatum, Erroll Garner – the list is endless. A vivid portrait of a living legend. (Illustrated hb £13.95 0 7043 2507 1)

LA TRISTESSE DE SAINT LOUIS: SWING UNDER THE NAZIS – Mike Zwerin

A study of jazz in occupied Europe. Amid Tyranny, enforced uniformity and the ruthless suppression of non-Aryans, jazz survived, even flourished: Django Reinhardt, a gypsy, was the most popular musician in Paris; George Scott, a black, was in a similar position in Warsaw; jazz bands were formed in the concentration camps themselves and many German officers were fans of the music – one even produced a clandestine jazz newsletter. A startling picture of one of the grimmest eras in recent history and a moving tribute to the resilience of jazz and the people who play it. (Illustrated hb £13.95 0 7043 2420 2)

B.B. KING – Charles Sawyer

The 'definitive blues/jazz biography' (*Los Angeles Times*) of the foremost blues singer and guitarist of our time, B.B. King includes a thorough critical analysis of his music and traces his life from its sharecropping beginnings to world acclaim.

'A thorough, highly readable biography written with great respect and knowledge of King and his music' (*Guardian*). (Illustrated pb £4.95)

BILLIE'S BLUES – John Chilton

The first ever biography of the greatest jazz singer of the forties and fifties, *Billie's Blues* lifts the truth about Holiday's dramatic and tragic life from the myths which have grown up since her death twenty-five years ago.

'One of the most lucid jazz biographies yet published' (Alun Morgan). (Illustrated pb £4.95)

BIRD LIVES! – Ross Russell

The magnificent and harrowing story of a towering talent poorly rewarded by a society that has too long brutalized its Black membership, told by a man who was often (as President of Dial Records) at the centre of the turmoil Charlie Parker created. 'Indispensable reading!' (Leonard Feather); '... the best biography of any jazz musician that we have' (Ralph Gleason). (Illustrated pb £4.95)

SHOWTIME AT THE APOLLO – Ted Fox

A history of America's foremost venue for Black music, the Apollo Theatre in Harlem, the book traces, through interviews, personal reminiscences and a vast wealth of extraordinary photographs, the changing fortunes of the theatre itself and, by extension, of the art form it housed. Swing, bebop, rhythm and blues, modern jazz, gospel, funk, soul, comedy and dance – the Apollo presented them all. Artists who played there include Billie Holiday, Sammy Davis Jr, James Brown, Lionel Hampton, Louis Jordan, Sarah Vaughan – a who's who of Black music.

'Immaculately researched, funny, sad, well-paced ... I'd been waiting years for such a tome' (Fred Dellar); 'An in-depth and enlightening book' (Dionne Warwick); 'A fitting tribute to the entertainment value of Black culture' (Jeffrey C. Stewart). (Illustrated hb £13.95 0 7043 2531 4).

STORMY WEATHER – Linda Dahl

'The definitive study of women in jazz' and 'an incredible job of research', *Stormy Weather* traces the substantial contribution, largely 'forgotten', of women to jazz since its first beginnings. (Illustrated hb £12.50 0 7043 2477 6).

putting the catgut out

FOR EVERY improviser, a reason: for being; for doing. And every one of them different. Different roots – different experiences – and different outcomes. The course of improvised music is never smooth.

For violinist Phil Wachsmann, the course has marked nothing less than a personal liberation. From the classical improvising group Chamberpot, to the international free music forum Company; from the intricate music and dance experiments of Balance, to the almost wilfully vulgar exploits of The Bugger All Stars – Wachsmann's commitment has been total. And yet the protestations of this well-spoken, rather portly gent seem a little coy. In the pluralistic musical world he values, improvisation is just "more exciting".

His choice could so easily have been different. He settled in London in 1970, planning on developing both his writing and improvising, having spent the previous year lecturing in composition at Durham University. His own period of study, first at Durham, and later in France and America, had introduced him to the work of Ives and Cage.

"By then, my commitment to contemporary music was very strong. I was almost obsessed by there being no social context which could bring it to life."

Wachsmann has seen little change to the social and political climate affecting improvisors.

"And I don't change as long as institutions such as the BBC see themselves as custodians of tradition. Also, The Arts Council's insecurity as to their own future seems to have affected their relationship with contemporary arts. It's as if there's a sneaking conservatism at work. I think a certain anarchical situation is healthy – you have to make mistakes in order to progress – and it's the Arts Council's job to encourage the scene at all levels. Commissioning is the death of music."

Wachsmann admits his admiration for musicians and composers who, unlike him, have not had a conventional classical training: "... they're not burdened under the weight of having to learn what other people have done". Again, his Pansian experience provides a clue.

"Structuralism was the thing just after the student revolution – and the concept of actually assessing a piece of music in its own terms rather than having to refer to external or socially approved language really excited me."

Perhaps to this end, Wachsmann has co-ordinated a workshop in South London for several years.

"Inspired teaching is about creating a situation in which someone can discover what they want to do, or what can be done. At West Square, I've been able to experiment without the worry of whether its working or not – that's essential for contemporary music."

WACHSMANN REFUTES the idea that he has rejected his training. Just as "Cage and Ives increased my understanding of older music", so Wachsmann's experiments with

electronic delay systems and polyphonic solo music are informed by fugues and Bach's violin sonatas. But there are other disciplines too – many of them non-musical. Or should I say, extra-musical, for Wachsmann's new-found interests – from Tai Chi and alternative medicine, to visuals and dance – have manifested themselves in the continuity and feel of his playing. Where he was once brusque, one-dimensional and brittle in tone, Wachsmann's sound is now more reflective, more harmonious, and easy.

For the second side of his excellent solo album *Writing In Water* Wachsmann collaborated with dancers Pamela Hiley and Jude Siddall. It proved a significant advance, with different priorities to his working with Shelley Lee in the group Balance back in 1972.

"The real feeling of the music is not in the sound – it's something going on behind it... the gestures, which provide the beauty. What was so important to my solo record was the discovery that there was more to life than you could write down, or talk about. A lot of it is to do with feelings, and the generative force of visuals."

Wachsmann sees his meeting guillemet and performance artists Hugh Metcalfe as particularly important to challenging what had been his uncompromising focus on the sound. Together with Siddall's theories on energy flow and choreography, it has changed Wachsmann's view of improvisation from "a kind of instant composition" quite radically.

"One thing you miss in composition is the process through which the music has been arrived at. Improvisation can be horrifyingly total."

He sees Company, with whom he's recently been involved, as "a brilliant recipe which sharpens the extremes without prejudicing them. But those extremes are not necessarily opposites."

"The area of risk between one concert and the next can be completely different. The actual process of improvisation goes on before your eyes, including dishonesty, when it occurs – when someone is trying to show off. And the context is such that a piece might not work – but it doesn't mean that it is not interesting."

"You were seeing a problem outlined – not a disaster."

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Solo: *Writing In Water* (Bead 23)

With Richard Beswick & Matt Hutchinson:

Wayah (Kubu Cassette 1)

With Chamberpot: *Sparks Of The Desire*

Magneto (Bead 7)

With Howard Riley & Barry Guy,

Improvisations Are Forever Now (Vinyl VS 113)

With The Bugger All Stars: *Bonzo Bites Back* (Bead 21)

With Tony Oxley: *February Papers* (Incus 18)

With The London Jazz Composers Orchestra: *Stringer* (FMP SAJ 42)

With various from the West Square Workshop: *Electronic Music Project* (Kubu Cassette 4)

NICK WHITE



Violinist Phil Wachsmann tells how bowing and scraping can be good for you.

DAVID ILIC strings along.





NEW YORK EAR AND EYE

Our man on the sidewalks: PETER PULLMAN

LOCATED ON the exclusive Upper East Side is the stately 92nd Street (short for YM-YWHA), a cedar-paneled concert hall with adjacent smoking rooms and parlours. Spending an evening at 'the club' couldn't have been any sane person's choice for a jazz spot. With six nights' worth of "Cake-Walking Babies," "Swinging the Blues" and "Whorehouse Piano" on the red-white-and-blue Jazz In July program, not even the madcaps were worth listening to.

Somehow the irony of boogie-woogie, honky-tonk and other musics born of insalubrious digs being played in such environs was lost on the grey-flannel-and-blue-blazer set. Dick Hyman, who "Artistic Directed" the week, promoted one of the gigs as a re-creation of "Paul Whiteman's Historic Aeolian Hall Concert of February 12, 1924." Re-creations, not recreations. He even attempted to turn "The Last of the Whorehouse Piano Players," the music that took me to such a posh venue, into a school lesson. (Along with Dicks Sudhalter and Wellstood, and Vince Giordano et al., Hyman forms a cadre of muscans-scholars who know the early Chicago, Harlem and Swing Song books perfectly, and organize festivals of 'acceptable' locales where they discourse to the agreeable bourgeoisie. They display admirable fealty to Armstrong, etc. and patiently tell us what we are hearing.)

One can hardly dispute their technique: Hyman and Wellstood, who duet as "Stridemonster!", faithfully dispatched "Sheikh of Araby," and respectfully submitted to us another of their masters' (James P. Johnson) pieces, "What's the Use of Being Alone?," where they take turns on the melody (the other 'striding') - but without any fire of spontaneity, the duet begged "What's the Use of Being Together?" (At least at the Ethel Waters Tribute during Kool, although the 'academy' approach was evident, their duets seemed to breathe a bit more.)

As soloists they provide a bit more oxygen. Wellstood did the clever conflation of James P.'s "Snowy Morning Blues" and "Carolina Shout," where he was properly bottom-heavy, as good stride must be. Hyman, a more delicate player, skillfully wended his way through "Jitterbug Waltz," but it did get a bit precious. For guys who were in a whorehouse, I'd say they hardly loosened the top button on their shirt collars.

Jay McShann opened the second half, and turned the club from a "Country" into a "Night" one. With Ralph Sutton he's been touring the States for awhile as the aviator of the 'whorehouse' sound. They opened with a medley of sorts, where plenty of "I've Got Rhythm" changes surfaced - only to get subsumed again in a maze of boogie-woogie patterns, quick allusions, etc. They followed with "Chicago," a tune evocative of the city. Or Hootie played it with his right-hand only; his left hand kept jabbering (gesturing) at his capable rhythm, Butch Miles and Milt Hinton. McShann kept barreling along with the right hand, half-taunting, half-encouraging Hinton

with the left. The old warhorses, now nodding and sparring with each other, join in playful synergy: Hinton, tired of that jabbering left hand, "takes it on". The Judge metes out musical justice, becoming the left-handed balance to Hootie's right hand. Before it's over he's given McShann his left hand back, and Hootie dishes out some "Jitterbug Waltz" chords with it.

Sutton then soloed on a Willie "The Lion" Smith piece, "Echo of Spring", where some sonorous chords emerged amidst a stiff reading of the piece. Without McShann's boyish ebullience, Sutton seemed academic. Hootie then returned without fanfare for a KC blues with plenty of boogie. When he started to sing, he surprised us - out of the honky-tonk of a Midwest saloon came a light tenor, warbling "Hello, Little Girl". Then the tune became a blues whisper, as he delicately tapped chords only. When he had us good and quiet, restless and attentive, he started strutting again, sustaining arpeggios, pumping the pedals and using the old ticks. This is what it shoulda been all night. Jay McShann is what the others teach.

It's odd. Many of the crowd started digging Hootie, maybe wondering who this newcomer is. It seems to take a 'society' event and lavish prices to open people's ears. When McShann played downtown several months ago, even at a slick club, the crowds were modest-sized. Respectful, but modest.

Hinton, who recently celebrated his 75th birthday, followed with a highly unusual solo - "Joshua At The Battle Of Jericho". Done entirely pizzicato, he stopped, double-stopped, plucked and strummed that bass, getting at least a quartet's worth of music out of it. Then the other three musicians re-joined the Judge for the finale: "St. Louis Blues". McShann strode in and strutted out of the melody, and Sutton kicked in some real swing, finally unwinding a bit. It was the last of the good stuff we were to hear (the whorehouse reverted to a classroom as I left), and it kept me stridin' all the way home.

AT THE OTHER end of the scale, and the other end of the map (or even a bit off it...), Jameel Moondoc and the Jus Grew Orchestra are in medias res at a club called Nether/Nor. They have been in residence, on Thursdays, for about a year. Located between Avenues C & D on East 63rd Street, this music lays bare the lie that Manhattan is an asphalt jungle - coming out of the club, you reach dust-covered roads; so far east not even the pavement dares to tread. This is really Rongovav.

Inside, things are a bit inchoate as well. A welcomed antidote to the suffocating gilt of the clubs, you feel you're in the middle of a dressing room - musicians everywhere slipping beers, taking up, sitting with friends, maybe fingering a horn or fixing a reed... crazy, like a 50's beatnik scene. What looks like a decent-sized crowd for 11 pm on a Thursday (and practically in the East River)

becomes pretty meagre when 70% of those seated take the bandstand.

I made it eighteen pieces, but after a tented, who can be sure? The group was so large that Moondoc, leader and alto sax (with three others), had to point to his head when he wanted the piece to return there. He could hardly be seen, much less heard above the street brawl/town meeting he tried to referee. A rag-tag assortment of lower East Side types; a whole section seemed to lose their place in the piece, and as they rifled through pages of a score they were hardly missed. The first piece was a lazy melody with occasional flourishes at the bridge, but the group was so unmanageable it didn't matter if they made it to the next section's part or not. I respect the workshop process, but every shop floor must have a steward (see: Mingus). About the best Moondoc could hope for, in the early goings, was to be an air-traffic controller, waving his arms, hoping to bring this jumble in without crashing.

And yet, as the evening wore on, Jus Grew did just that. The second piece swung a little harder, seemed a bit tighter. Roy Campbell, a very promising brass player, was quite inventive on French Horn in the little space he got. William Parker, amongst the most imaginative (and selfless) bassists around, lent dignity to the proceedings, establishing that rock-steady beat of his where he could, even filling in little figures where he saw an opening. There was still the feeling of two or three bands somehow occupying the same space, two female vocalists tried to scat over the top, but with such a low ceiling not even the trombone could stretch. A couple of the altos really soared, and Moondoc used the macaronic aspect to advantage by ending with a Mingusian, chaotic bit.

What the band (assembly? small village?) lacks in depth, of shadings and tonal colours, they make up in earnestness. Moondoc is not much of a writer, as many of his melodies have a gothic feel that his lethargic group only exaggerate. But he is determined, and has gotten together some fine musicians. When he wanted to correct something in the rhythm section, he got off his little platform and did it, while the others carried on. When he did get the engines going, the band showed some subtleties - and he had a considerable palette at his disposal. My guess is that a more encouraging environ (they were due at an 'established' club the week after this gig) and a slightly smaller herd might yield a more co-ordinated stampede. A little more consistent rigour from the leader is needed.

But it was fun to be in the 'rehearsal'. A funk piece worked very well, and seemed well-suited to the barno outside Moondoc tried a trade-off of section riffs which showed cleverness, and in the funky reprise even the vocalists got their kicks in. And so, if this is a group with more spit than polish, so what? What are chops for? ■



demolition, mann

BIBA KOPF stands in the rubble.

■EINSTÜRZENDE NEUBAUTEN London Heaven

EVERY AUDIENCE has one: a heckler who, encouraged by the cackle of a few companions, deludes himself into thinking he's the evening's true centre of attraction. Tonight's is particularly single-minded, a gimlet-gob with but one word to bore into the gathering's collective consciousness. It is neither difficult nor particularly novel. In fact it was overly familiar way before it was implanted in his throat. Hinged in the middle, its two syllables see-saw easily on the tongues of drunks, hooligans and babes, thereby accounting for its popularity. The word? You guessed it: Rambo. But louder! RAM-BO! RAM-BO!

Repeated often enough, it has a mantric effect, losing in those spiel-spewing it a sense of poetry they never suspected having. RIM-BAUDI! RIM-BAUDI!

Unwittingly, the gimlet-gob has furnished the unfamiliar with two useable parameters, a pair of variables to help get a fix on this quite extraordinary German group, whose name translates as Collapsing New Buildings.

Rambo and Rimbaud. Action and word. Body and soul. Health and sickness. Discipline and disease. Pugilism and poetry. Violent deeds and violated sensibilities. It goes on, irreconcilable tendencies melding together in the impact of a jarring collision. Rambo and Rimbaud. Alternate polarities are made physically manifest onstage in the group's two most immediately recognizable figures. There is the bulk of FM Einheit (Muffit), stripped down to flak trousers, his muscles glistening under sweat, rippling and straining as he paces the set, metal object in hand, beating out rudimentary rhythm on junk, leaping down beats the equivalent of the primitive rollers Egyptian slaves used to transport pyramid stones. So, too, does Muffit get EN's massive nose moving.

Then there is Blixa Bargeld: a pair of bulging eyes on a stalk. His body is so thin you fear the guitar strap cutting into his collar bone must be the cause of the torments he voices. In reality, the torments are tagged to his impossible ego, the precious source of his newer songs which he alternately nourishes and abuses. His ego is currently tailored into a grotesquely comic onstage figure; his hair, teased into a bedraggled porcupine spray, tops a high-cheekboned sawtooth face tucked into the folds of a broad White Rabbit-styled bow. Death, as his song goes, is indeed a dandy.

If Bargeld is the volatile fuse coursing the demon flower, its other members are equally important. Marc Chung's blunt bass alternately buttresses and buffets the noise, corralling the pending chaos into shape. Andrew Urruh is the group's wild card, a joker non-musician who terrorizes the others into keeping on their toes with the tools and toys he dangerously wields. Their youngest, rawest member Alexander Hacke (né Borsig, under which name he produced an excellent, elegiac and crackling electro waltz called "Hiroshima") bleeds yowls from a guitar deployed as noise generator.

Forgive me for concentrating on appearance, but what is live if not a spectacle? Specially here, where the stage is set like a performance installation, this time dominated by what seems to be a giant radiator dangling behind the group like a gong. Before it there's a splendid percussion sculpture constructed from miked up springs stretched taut, like Rambo's chest expanders, which produces an odd harmony from percussive clatter and bassy reverberation. Littered across the stage is the arsenal of objects beaten and discarded by the group as the urge takes them. The tail end of a set grotesquely distended by interruptions will see Urruh raking and rattling a supermarket trolley. The incident is a perfectly absurd/absolutely perfect example of how the group extract from unusual sources the distinctive tones, dissonances, dull leaden thuds and harsh timbres with which they have extended their musical vocabulary.

BLIXA BARGELD once stated how they sought to render all musical definitions invalid, thereby establishing all noise as potential music. He also used to cite Walter Benjamin's famous insight – "the destructive character is cheerful" – by way of explaining their absorption in the doing, of cleaning space with no regard for the consequences. Thus did Neubauten attempt to do away with preconceived ideas, the noise emanating from the stage serving as a negative energy alternately sucking up musical signals and feeding off their native Berlin's Abyss and End mythologies. All the time, of course, adding a few of their own. (In the shadow of the city's ruins, under new concrete overpasses they drummed as if they wanted to reawaken the dormant ghosts of German history by way of touching the emotional hollow at the centre of the German economic miracle. In early songs

like "Sehnsucht" [idiosyncratically broken down and translated as "Desire Addict"] Neubauten/Bargeld punished themselves into feeling.) The cost was the pain they put themselves through. Theirs was truly a music wrought from end for the Wreck Age.

Having survived it, it must be depressing to be expected permanently to repeat it. Because the reverberations of early Neubauten were slow in reaching Britain, their growing audiences here want them to reassemble their demolition sets, only to destroy them all over again. Continued spontaneity? A warped expectation to say the least. Many who go looking for Rambo are puzzled to find Rimbaud instead.

Having circumscribed chaos, Einstürzende Neubauten are no longer interested in supplying vicarious thrills. If they once brutalized musical language, it was only to re-sensitize it, I can't think of another group whose musical language and lyrical concerns are so closely integrated. Surprisingly so, as Bargeld has narrowed his gaze to the subject he knows best – his self. Nevertheless the others uncannily stick with him, summoning sounds capable of rending the heart. (No matter how deeply he immerses himself in punishingly hedonistic routines his extraordinary loops and contortions transcribed into celebratory or immensely lonely lyrics – they always meet his changing moods.)

This onstage closeness translates into tighter song structures, inside which they have relocated a capacity to surprise. Bursts into improvisation feel more spontaneous, the frustrations of tonight's GLC interference and the fuses blowing twice are here channelled into tremendous rhythm rushes beaten out on various metals. Bargeld howling in unison and Hacke resembling one of those gawky great guitarists from an earlier Krautrock period. Their dabbling with various decay times, live overdubbed on taped originals like "Vanadium I Ching", is at times stunningly inventive.

If discipline might once have seemed like anathema to them, they have found through its application the stamina to go on, push through the rubble of their own past. Back then intuition valuably took them this difficult route and linked them with a popular audience denied more academic improvisers. Now their very real command of their chosen language will see their ideas.

The bruised soul of a poet in the body of a brute. In Einstürzende Neubauten, Rimbaud and Rambo become one.

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LIVEWIRE



MIRIAM MAKEBA London, Royal Festival Hall

MIRIAM MAKEBA gets to play tonight, in this hallowed and hollow palace of culture and privilege, because the BBC have refused to sign a GLC statement on future performance by their symphony orchestra in South Africa under apartheid. The Empress of African Song has played in England only twice in twelve years. But for all her tough professional maturity, she'll be unable to turn this evening into any kind of celebration of her people's unity in the face of daily inhuman brutality. Let alone find comfort in the support of this well-heeled audience. There are too many things working against it.

Her bend don't help, a glib and noisy jazz-fusion outfit, dated, dull. There was little of today's Africa in their music. Shikisha were the backing trio: they were able to flourish some of the lightness and humour that can be found to counter bad times. But only when they sang their own material, alone. And they have more youthful exuberance than depth as yet. Only Makeba's voice has the power to evoke the complex and shadowed emotions caught up in a political struggle of this violence and urgency. The mood seemed torn three ways: there was nothing developed that could be built on.

Her strength of personality derives partly from her compact frame – it's a lift just to see her walk on and smile – and partly from the edges of her resolute voice. In the course of a held note, she allows an almost imperceptible wail to undulate delicately through it. Her music has spreading across it a dark stain of weariness – no music so unfree of natural growth could fail to reflect its bitter confinement, it's a music that won't be whole until her mother country is truly free.

Till then, the songs have to bear a weight of entertainment, expression and expiation – of our guilt – that cracks them across. And they were none of them strong songs. The "Click Song" ("As they call it," she whispered flatly) is collapsed into cabaret novelty: it's telling that the only song where all strands seemed pulled together was a song written by a young Guinean ("He is no more"), and more Latin than African. Other than this, the tunes are nothing – even those composed by Hugh Masekela (but am I alone in thinking him astonishingly overrated?). It's only in the grating caresses where a phrase falls away that reality seems able to surface. Her long spoken raps are husky with harsh amusement and with physical pain: but just the way we've set ourselves to hear her tonight inoculates against proper understanding.

And outside, *Brixton* is once more in flame. Ach, the venter is rubbing too bloody thin in this "civilised" country not be angry at this failure. We expect too much from Miriam Makeba, from her beleaguered people, from worthy and minor artists like Masekela. The failure is entirely ours.

Mark Sinker

DIANA ROSS London Royal Albert Hall

THIRTEEN YEARS ON, has this lady learned to sing the blues? Jazz snobs have held her portrayal of Billie Holiday against Ms Ross; other dissenters are content to point out her

gooey material, strident and uniform delivery and the kind of ruthless image-building which delineates the modern superstar. Today, with her ageing catalogue of hits, she is preparing for middle age as a red hot momma.

Ross starts her show with the classic Me anthem "It's My Turn" and an evangelical saunter through the crowd to the stage; it's a pity this show of warmth is deflated by the hungry presence of two vigilant bodyguards who shadow her every step. The programme subsequently pegs her in two camps: society hostess crooner and foxy penthouse woman. You can guess what she gets the audience to do on "Reach Out And Touch", but there is actually less of that sort of Butlin's jollity than she used to peddle.

"Good Morning Heartache" is a sad, broken little song, yet Ross sings it with a metallic elegance that's about as wrong as can be. If she might avoid a direct attempt at apeing Holiday's tears (she's even stopped lagging behind the beat), this superwoman steelness is no better. Because she's spent her post-Supremes years singing before big audiences in big halls, Ross has made her voice and style and phrasing suitably large – and it sits awkwardly with the vulnerable songs she likes to sing.

Because I enjoy the occasional gush of showbiz passion, her set was painless enough – just, sometimes, a nag on the nerves. Her new *Eaten Alive* album received appropriately short shrift: the Ross act is already built on old songs, played against a proficient and surprisingly lean little big band. There was no attempt at the classic "Muscles". And, in truth, I have already forgotten most of what happened – this was a show to stir old memories, not create new ones.

Richard Cook

KODO London Queen Elizabeth Hall

A FIST of sound fills the Queen Elizabeth Hall; two musicians batter the giant *O-daiko* drum, pounding out their untiring rhythms as one improvises across the other's patterns. The reverberations engulf the audience in a gentle, startling rising tide of tension.

The *O-daiko* marks the climax of Kodo's concert; it weighs nearly one thousand pounds, its head is almost four foot in diameter and it has been hollowed from a single piece of wood. The deep awesome warmth of its tone is characteristic of the twin attributes of Kodo which run through the whole programme.

During a first encounter with the ensemble it is the stamina and physical power of the group's drumming which leaves the most indelible impression. Yet there is this other side to their work. It is not only apparent in the delicate precision of the detail of much of their drum play, but also in other aspects of their programme.

In, for example, the busy, brittle intricacy of "Tsugaru Shamisen" (a shamisen duo), "Nishimonai", a dance with the face hidden and emphasis placed on fluttering hands, or the warmly sensuous and crystalline combination of drum, steel drum and koto found in "Hae" (which blossomed in the bright QEH acoustic, whereas some of the more attacking drum work became a little muddled and unclear).

LIVEWIRE

That duality is evident, too, in Kodo's attitude to their art. On the one hand they scrupulously preserve centuries-old Japanese forms, investing them with fresh energy, while on the other, they propel those idioms forward — ensuring that this is a living tradition — through the performance of works by contemporary composers such as Maki Ishii, Motofumi Yamaguchi and Roetsu Toshi, all of whom were represented by pieces written during the last ten years.

However, it is the drumming which remains at the heart of Kodo's performance (their name translates as 'heartbeat', whereas their previous name — Ondeko-ze — meant 'demon drummers'). And it does not disappoint. The rigorous discipline and mastery they display is epitomised in "Miyake Daiko", with solo and duo patterns scattered over a compelling groundswell and muscular ensemble parts, or "Chonlime", with its lightning shifts across their drums.

But their most haunting shot is their first. "Monochrome" was created for them by the Japanese composer Maki Ishii, and predominantly employs the small taiko drums. It opens the concert with whispering, precise drum work heard as if carried over a great distance on the wind. The volume and intensity of the music gradually undulates in a series of slow parabolas, rising to shattering levels and falling to a murmur at the edge of silence. Into the prismatic ticking of the unison play drop accented, disappearing clusters and drumstrokes set across the rhythms, and — eventually — the swell of sound from a Chinese gong adds new perspective.

"Monochrome" is a stunning opening to a strong concert. It is a piece of music which also continues to rear up in the memory long after the concert is over.

Kenneth Ansell

■ SKELETON CREW Munich, Alabama-Halle

FRED FRITH'S endurance out there on the fringe this past decade and a half testifies to the seriousness of his intention. He obviously knows where he wants his "righteously wonky music" to go end, at a Skeleton Crew gig one applauds his dogged, if embittered, persistence. But the fringe ain't what it used to be.

When Frith and Co started out, one could speak, without feeling silly, of Rock in Opposition. (At least, Chris Cutler could.) At the time, it was not apparent that this radical music, predicated upon the eclecticism of the first few Soft Machines and Syd Barrett's Pink Floyd would hatch its own tradition, but that is just what it has gone and done. "Marginal" is now a neat little category with characteristics as clearly defined as "bluegrass" or "twelve-tone". In consequence, its shock-power is now zilch. Too far removed from the mainstream of pop to mirror or parody it or suggest improvements, Skeleton Crew caters to an audience that knows what to expect of it, and sends its followers home smug in their taste for adventurous music, even though the adventure is long since distilled. We know exactly that Fred is going to sing in that singularly unattractive post-psychosis Barrett mode and that the music will scurry through lots of liny episodes in the tradition of Zappa's uncredited raids on the Harry Partch songbook. And since this is Skeleton Crew we



CHRIS CLUNN

Miriam Makeba calls down Africa

Keda call up the spirits

Diana Ross calls for her dressmaker



Bud Shank: "Mmm! Nice review!"

know too that the question of rhythm will be dealt with dismissively by any limbs going spare.

There are a few more of those now that the group is a trio with the addition of Ceena or Zeena or even possibly Xena Parkins on keyboard and prepared harp (the other harp, Little Walter freaks). The cockhanded beat ensures that Skeleton Crew sound like the Whitest Band Ever, an achievement of sorts. Seeing them twice in Munich in the last year, as duo and trio, I was reminded of Rashied Ali's indignation when various members of the Coltrane combo decided they'd rattle a tambourine or shake a bell as the mood took them. Ali pointed out that there were men who knew how to play these instruments and who were being insulted in a roundabout way by the misappropriation of them. So it is with Skeleton Crew. The crudity and clumsiness of their drumming is diverting at first but quickly settles into a bore, much as the primal thump of the Velvet Underground always did.

At their principal instruments everybody sounded okay, Tom Core's cello at the brink of excellence, even. Best moment of the night

was when Frith temporarily relinquished the role of the well-balanced avant-gardist (chaps on both shoulders) to play rollicking fiddle on a Jelly Roll Morton tune. Sighs of relief all round.

Steve Lake

■ BUD SHANK London Barnes Bulls Head

BUD SHANK is currently playing with a fire and passion quite unexpected to those who have heard only his most well-known work, with the 'chamber-jazz' group The LA4 - it is this engagement with the Tony Lee trio is any evidence. His forceful tone reminiscent of that of Phil Woods, and roughened at moments of heightened tension in the manner of that artist (which is not to claim any direction of influence), he played with exceptional fervour yet perfect control. Whether by necessity or choice, the sets were composed almost entirely of standard material, with the exception of a delightful original, "Samba d'Orfeo".

In this last-named, Mark Taylor on drums showed himself a resourceful Latinist, while Tony Lee contributed a capable solo. The venue's regular piano-player uses more notes and mostly strikes them harder than the average pianist, however, so the Bulls Head piano-tuner is assured of regular employment. (Some reversal of these two tendencies would, I think, make Tony Lee's solos seem less effortful than they do, and would allow the good ideas that he does have to stand out more clearly.) Dave Green was rock-steady on bass, while the relative lack of drum solos was to be applauded (nothing personal).

On "I'm Old-Fashioned" the altoist's harmonic adventurousness was much in evidence, while his solo on the James Last (whaaa?) - Ed) favourite "Time After Time" was more than not enough to have secured his ejection from that worthy's aggregation. "Body and Soul" was notable for the fine opening duet between alto and bass, but the bizarrely titled Vernon Duke ballad "Cabin in the Sky" featured a solo a little spoiled by over-repetition of a favourite figure - Bud Shank is perhaps over-fond of repeated single notes or see-sawing between two notes as devices to maintain interest. But this really is a cavil against what was a most stunning performance. (Incidentally, Mr Shank commented with restraint on the number of "little red lights winking" at him from cassette-recorders, the owners perhaps considering that their entry ticket included a cut-price recording fee.)

Andy Hamilton

■ BRECON JAZZ '85 August 16th, 17th and 18th

BRECON is a small market town in picturesque mid-Wales. It's the ideal place to go if you're, well, visiting picturesque mid-Wales, otherwise it's peaceful and quiet or quiet and peaceful, depending on what side of town you happen to be. But in August 1984 Brecon did a remarkable thing. It opened its doors to jazz. Not a half-hearted affair, but completely OTT and the result was an unqualified success.

This year the format was repeated, but now the whole town was behind the event and the presentations more ambitious. Once again the town centre was closed to traffic, two bandstands erected and for a Friday night, Saturday and Sunday, Brecon's narrow streets reverberated to the sound of live jazz. Throughout the town pubs and clubs, the Guildhall, the Market Hall and just about every other hall vied for attention presenting jazz musicians of every stripe from the UK, the Continent and the States. Bemused locals stood in their doorways ogling the crowds, shops celebrated jazz in their windows and licences welcomed a mid-summer bonanza.

Saturday got under way with a street parade a la New Orleans and eased into some jumping Mainstream with a Warren Vache group that included Milt Hinton, Gus Johnson and Stan Gneg. Vache's robust beer-swilling style soon mobilized a huge crowd around the open-air bandstand, and it was interesting to see his mix'n match pairing with Alan Eldon. Never outdistanced by the American star, he forced a level of competition that almost resulted in the number one seed going to a tie-break in the final set. Then it was back to the dawn of jazz with the European Classic Jazz Band, sparked by the precise lead of trumpeter Bent Persson (not the well known spelling mistake, but a Swede who's got the young Louis suite well covered). With saxes-in-Djangoist Fapy Lafertin and clarinetist John Defferly, they explored some 1930's period pieces that even won applause from a group of punks studiously trying to look uninterested.

Around the corner District 6 combined urban jazz and rural South African folk music, highstepping jazz-rock and township to-life. A shade highly stylized, Jim Dvorak on trumpet and Harrison Smith (tenor) were left wondering if their highly spiced trombone section of Annie Whitehead and Nick Evans. Tommy Chase's Blue Note groove is the very stuff of festival jazz. High on energy and commitment they found themselves preaching to the unconverted when they kicked off their evening set. The large, youthfully bewildered crowd, to whom Art Blakey was as remote as Archduke Francis Ferdinand, responded to their baptism under fire with tremendous enthusiasm.

The major coup of the weekend for Festival Director Jeff Williams, however, was the first performance outside London of Loose Tubes. A wonderful folly of a band, 22 members strong, they are the most original, stimulating and dynamic event in British jazz. Despite the weight of numbers, this youthful madison is surprisingly light on its feet. Highly articulate ensemble passages twinkle with wit, subvert into rock and explode into swing. Odd groupings of instruments form and re-form in between Cup Final roars of shouting ensemble passages; it is an arrangers' band, and Django Bates and Steve Berry have created a monster in their own image.

In total upwards of 30,000 people were exposed to jazz over the weekend, and clearly a good proportion for the first time. This is surely what jazz organizers throughout the country should be striving to achieve. With imagination, energy and a limited budget Brecon is both success story and challenge. The question is, do other regional administrators have equal imagination and energy?

Stuart Nicholson

LIVEWIRE

from smash hits to caesar's palace

**Doing just what she
always wanted —
to be a singer of
great songs. Pop
mistress MARI
WILSON speaks of
her plan to perform
in a jazz style.**

**RICHARD COOK
lends a sympathetic
ear.**

POP", SAYS Mari Wilson, the woman who once seemed a dizzy creation of that same idiom, "can be very short-lived.

"It gets so stretched out. You have a hit, and then you have to keep doing it at gigs. We had to keep working to support the band because it was so big. In the end I was thinking — why do I want to be a singer? Being on the cover of *Smash Hits* might seem fun when you're 16, but that's not what it was about. I wasn't really learning my craft."

Today, Ms Wilson has come to tell me about her new infatuation with jazz singing — but that's not being fair, and I've promised not to be cynical. In fact, this brisk, chatty, likeable woman is mainly pursuing the logical course of her first inspirations — the diamante torch singers of the 50s, smoke-stained bellads to order. Ten cents a dence?

Lost for months in what's politely termed a "contractual tangle", Wilson hasn't had a record out since the awful "Let's Make This Last" ("You didn't even hear it, did you?"). She watched Stuart Curtis, sax player in backing group the Wilsons, form a quartet — and then agreed to an invitation to "just go to a wine bar gig and get up and sing". Now a gig sheet is filling up, including residencies (this must be jazz) at London's Bass Club.

"I listened to this girl called Dee Bell, who made an LP with Stan Gatz for Concord. And the way she sang had so much ease... I knew I'd have to work at my singing, not just the other Trimmings. It's bloody hard work. You have to learn about it."

Is she daunted by the burden of the jazz singer's craft — having to know hundreds of songs, every kind of phrasing and sound?

continued on page 23





presents

THE AUTUMN JAZZ EXPLOSION



Saturday November 9th. 7.30 pm

E.C.M. Night

RALPH TOWNER & JOHN ABERCROMBIE
NORMA WINSTONE & JOHN TAYLOR
FIRST HOUSE

THE LOGAN HALL (University of London)
 20 Bedford Way, London WC2

Tickets: £7 on the door, £6 in advance from:
 The Bloomsbury Theatre Box Office (01-387 9629)
 Rhythm Records, Mole Jazz, Rays Jazz Shop
 or from Gemini Promotions

Monday November 11th. 7.30 pm

SUN RA
ARKESTRA
 plus
Back Door

THE FRIDGE (Formerly Ace Cinema),
 Town Hall Parade, Brixton Hill, SW2

Tickets: £7, available from The Fridge (01-326 5100)

Rhythm Records, Mole Jazz, Rays Jazz Shop
 or from Gemini Promotions



Sunday November 17th. 7.30 pm

TREVOR WATTS & MOIRE MUSIC
 (13 piece band including Maggie Nicols & Lol Coxhill)

THE LOGAN HALL (University of London)
 20 Bedford Way, London WC2

Tickets: £6 on the door, £5 in advance from
 The Bloomsbury Theatre Box Office (01-387 9629)
 Rhythm Records, Mole Jazz, Rays Jazz Shop
 or from Gemini Promotions





Sunday November 24th. 8 pm

HOWARD RILEY PROJECT

(with Evan Parker, Barry Guy,
John Stevens, Jeff Clyne, Tony Levin)

THE DONMAR WAREHOUSE,
41 Earlham Street, London WC2

Tickets: £4 available on the door

Monday December 2nd. 7.30 pm

Guitar Night

TERJE RYPDAL TRIO

LARRY CORYELL/EMILY REMLER TRIO

THE LOGAN HALL (University of London)
20 Bedford Way, London WC2

Tickets: £7 on the door, £6 in advance from:

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Tuesday December 3rd. 7.30 pm

JOE HENDERSON QUINTET

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a renaissance

Jamaal, Cosmetic and Prime Time — brilliant bassist Jamaaladeen Tacuma is powering the hypermodern sound for three of the hardest groups on the planet. In this exclusive interview, STEVE LAKE learns how the former Rudy McDaniels finds time to be a family man and a strummer of the bass balalaika.



STUART MICHOLSON

B ASSIST CIRCUMNAVIGATING

A Dressing Room. Dunchamp might have painted it, or Giacometti tweezed a representation out of pipe cleaners. A shimmering suit of almost violently intense dark red drapes the rail-thin frame of Jamaaladeen Tacuma. He glides around the walls in slow motion. A Steinberger bass, streamlined and foreshortened into some thoroughly alien implement, adds a few more futuristic angles to the picture. A flat-top haircut caps it, topping a face long as a Luba tribal mask.

Jamaaladeen is checking the overlapped posters that plaster every square inch of the backstage Alabama-Haile, Munich. "Hey did they play here?" he laughs. It amuses this tall Philadelphia to ponder the notion of his own band lounging around a dressing room that once housed Duran Duran. "Guess they won't play here again, right?"

In all probability, Jamaaladeen will. Although Tacuma's masterplan includes projected raids on the areas occupied by the likes of the Birmingham flyweights, he's abandoning nothing to get there. Important to catch this distinction, which distinguishes the bassist from more opportunistic contemporaries, at the outset.

The small concert hall is the comfortable natural habitat of Ornette Coleman's Prime Time. And Tacuma proposes to be with Prime Time "forever. Or at least until Ornette throws me out of the band." He considers this possibility, laughs briefly.

"But I don't think that's going to happen." Jamaaladeen has done as much as anyone to help ease Ornette's concepts into the current decade. He is most often the leading soloist in the almost-democratic, fast-moving world of Prime Time. His own records have promoted Coleman's writing: "Tacuma Song" on *Show Stopper*, and the controversial electrofunk version of "Dancing In Your Head" on *Renaissance Man*. Even more provocatively, Ornette guests on the new record by Tacuma's all-out dance band *Cosmetic*, who look on the liner photo like Kool And The Gang wandering into a Tears For Fears photo session (deceit jazz readers: these are a black pop group and a white pop group). (Thanks, Steve - deceit DJ.) While a self-ironic chorus chants "Ain't it funny/What people will do for the money" Ornette shoulders his way to the front of the mix and erupts in a solo of devilish cunning; smears of sound. He scorches skidmarks across the rhythm. Gunther Schuller and John Lewis would never understand. This is cross-cultural synthesis without the snobism of old.

Yet Tacuma is not really a universalist of the sort Oliver Lake, say, professes to be, not one of the gimme-all-in food-on-the-same-plate cats. Some days he wants to play in-the-pocket funk and nothing but, because . . . boy, roots have to be nourished, you know. Other days it's impossible to play too freely. A new composition might call for the contribution of

an oud player, a string sextet or a DMX drum machine. Tacuma moves between musical roles with the assurance of an actor trading roles. Like a Nicholson or Nolte, he'll save the script, find the art in anything, at worst prop it up by the integrity of his own performance.

That performance is the constant, and it was shaped under Ornette's guidance. Coleman writes with almost total disregard for the accepted range of a given instrument and lesser players have given up rather than try to meet the challenge (among them, musicians of the London Symphony Orchestra). But Jamaaladeen found his technique and his ideas stretched enormously by Prime Time's music. "In the beginning I behaved as if I'd grasped the concept. When I really did get on top of it, that's when things started to move really fast."

JAMAALADEEN TACUMA is a family man. Twenty-eight years old, he already has five kids. He is delighted when a further clutch of relatives show up at the Munich rehearsal. Two sets of couples. Cousins, in-laws. I forget. They watch Jamaal (the band) work out with pride.

"I still think of him as little Rudy," one of the women confides, nostalgically.

Rudy McDaniel, as Tacuma then was, was hip from the cradle. He dressed up just to watch *American Bandstand* on TV. Early influences included local Philadelphia soul bands such as Brenda and the Tabulations and the Five Stairsteps. Plus all the major black acts who played the Philly Uptown Theater - Temptations, James Brown, Stevie Wonder etc. He was also aware of the more innovative rock players and his first bass was a big white semi-acoustic Kimberly, which "looked just like the one Jack Casady had in the Jefferson Airplane".

His first professional gig was with organist Charles Earland, but he was fired from this after a year, allegedly for inadvertently stealing the limelight. Tacuma was demoralized by his dismissal. However, his abilities had already been noted by Miles Davis guitarist Reggie Lucas (who, incidentally, counts Madonna among his other "discoveries"). Lucas recommended Jamaaladeen to Coleman and the bassist was "shocked and stunned" by a phonecall inviting him to come to New York to audition for Ornette's band. In a matter of days he was inducted into Prime Time and living in Paris where the band was woodshedding, preparing the material that would later surface as the *Dancing In Your Head* and *Body Meta* albums.

And now?

"I'm just finishing up my third album as Jamaaladeen Tacuma, Jazz Artist." (Grins.) "Improvisational Artist, let's say. It's more of an 'international' record than the others. Recorded partly in Japan with musicians there, in Istanbul with musicians there, and in Paris with French players. And it was my hope

e man

for all
seasons

EVERY THURSDAY

M U S I C

T H E A T R E

C I N E M A

T E L E V I S I O N

S O U L

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to get to Egypt and Brazil to complete the thing there. That's still being worked on.

"And I just started my own production company. Here . . ."

He reaches into a breast-pocket for his wallet, and hands across a calling card in bright orange, bearing the motto *Jam-All Productions*. "I hope to be producing all kinds of people for that. And then there's a record label in Philadelphia called Philly World for whom I've already been producing Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes and many other rhythm and blues artists.

"It's 25 hours a day at the moment but it keeps me happy. I'll do a long run of studio work and then get out and play some improvisational things, maybe some duets with Cornell, to create a balance in my mind."

Cornell is Cornell Rochester, who plays with Tacuma's band Jamaal, and is easily the most exciting young drummer I've seen in the last few years.

"Oh, I've been playing with Jeff Beck, too. Under the production direction of Nile Rodgers. That was quite difficult for me, really a different situation. But I believe as a musician if you want to grow you should expose yourself to as many different forms of music as possible."

Healthy enough, but as we all know, success in the music world has not often hinged upon musical ability or even adaptability . . .

"You're talking about mape? Sure I think about that, too. I even think about it when I'm dealing with predominantly improvisational situations. I'm not disturbed by the word 'commercial'. Commercial to me is just a synonym for 'accepted' or 'proven'. It doesn't have a negative connotation. In that sense the music I'm doing with Cosmic is more

commercial than the music I'm doing with Jamaal, inasmuch as there's a channel already set up to deal with it."

BUT, HE adds, there's also a slightly subversive attitude at play. It's the wooden horse tactic. Cosmic looks like a gift for the funk stations but its records are loaded with other elements too. The game is to see how much you can sneak under the wire before someone screams "avant garde" and sends you back to the lofts.

"Bill Laswell and I talk about that stuff all the time. Strategies you can use to get things across. The fact is that there are a bunch of different markets out there. The barriers that separate them are usually pretty silly, but they're still there. You can't pretend that they aren't. So I work with a number of different situations and at some points people will look out onto the other things. Cosmic fans I say 'Oh he plays jazz too, huh?' and some of them will get into Jamaal and hopefully Ornette. And vice versa, though of course there are plenty of jazz fans who hate Cosmic."

Usually before they've heard it, right?

"Yeah, yeah. Anyway I don't worry about what any of them think. I just try to play as much music as I can. But there is a gradual change taking place in the pop world. Bill feels it, I feel it. There used to be a real

compositional sameness about pop songs, melodies always had to be real simple. Now melodies are getting more involved, or more abstract or something. And people are more open to sound as sound. Drum machines have given people faster access to more complicated rhythms . . ."

Meanwhile, Jamaaladeen Tacuma has bought himself a balalaika.

"A bass balalaika. Big thing, like this . . ." he sketches a huge triangle in the air. "Only three strings. Amazing sound. I'll take it out on the road, just as soon as I find someone to build a case for it . . . maybe my wife could sew some sort of bag for it . . ." He trails off.

Well, what is it with this tour through the ethnic musics of the world?

"I just touch base with that stuff. It's a passion that keeps on growing. I don't think quality can be measured any more just in terms of American music or European music. And what I keep finding out is that the music that's usually called primitive music is actually much more pure. These are systems that you can learn so much from. On the whole, music of the East seems to have so much more going for it. If you want to learn about rhythm, really learn, you have to study that. I learned so much about phrasing, and timing from Hamza El Din's oud playing, from Balinese gamelan, from Japanese koto and samisen players . . ."

JAMAALADEEN, I'm told, translates as "beauty of the faith". And though the faith in question is a spiritual one, Tacuma's faith in music, every last stratum of it, is also more enough to be called "beautiful". It would be hard to find a player more enthusiastic.

There's a lot worthy of discussion left out here for simple lack of space. Tacuma's membership in the intermittently operative New York art/noise band the Golden Palatines . . . the sessions with Blood Ullmer, Kip Henrath, Welt Dickerson . . . his work with poet Jayne Cortez . . .

But in time all will be explicated in the pages of *The Wire* and elsewhere. Tacuma after all is going to be around for a long time.

Call this an introduction, merely ●

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**It's a
fair question.
MARK SINKER
seeks the
answer from
Pinski Zoo
mainman Jan
Kopinski, and
finds out how
they took their
own kind of
fusion to
Poland and
cracked open
some new sorts
of freedom.**

YOU ZOO ME

THE SUMMER is making the most of the two days allotted it this year. On photographer Derek Ridgers' radio, Gooch and Gower are putting together the biggest second-wicket stand since

Coin and Abel, or some such. It's sweltering, so we're sitting under the trees, in a quiet and grubby little square off Tottenham Court Road, in the shadow of the Post Office Tower, and discussing state-of-the-art Jazz, musical snobbery, and the rise and rise of Pinski Zoo. Me and a man from the North Country.

Jan Kopinski is thin and wiry, younger-looking and less stern than his picture. His outfit Pinski Zoo achieved a smidgeon of attention in this age of Rip Rig & Panic, some time back, and then spent the time since recovering. Lazy association with RR&P got them tagged young white tyros, and they found their access to audiences outside their Nottingham base was cut off when the perfectly fickle pop audience began to tail away. The double-edged snootiness that RR&P seemed quite happy to foster and exploit drove the Zoo overseas, to look for relatively open-minded audiences. And it's between two Polish tours that I've persuaded their nominal leader to venture down to London.

Now the idea of an Afro-American music taking any sort of root in Britain is strange enough. But somehow, to this admittedly untravelled observer, Poland seems an even more classically distant and implausible patch. So what's it like out there, who listens, plays?

"Well, I found some right prats, people right into status. But some of them just love to play, and play expressively." It turns out players and audiences are fairly well trained, preferring Davis and Coleman to Coryell, for example. Davis played there recently, and a bootleg of his dates was made widely available – not only sanctioned, but pressed and distributed by the state. State Capitalism seems to get itself in interesting ethical dilemmas. And Poland fascinates Kopinski, for its strange ways, and the light it throws back on ours:

"One of the blokes there, one of the judges at this thing we did, he did a programme on us on Radio Warsaw, he knew all the names and stuff like, like anyone else, but he'd latched onto some things I'd been saying for some time – that Coltrane sounds to me like Penderecki and Penderecki makes you feel sometimes just like Albert Ayler. And all this

total feeling. He told me Coltrane is the man in Poland."

On the cover of *Introduce Me To The Doctor*, the Zoo's '81 LP, there's a list of names (headed Surgery): it reads Coltrane, Penderecki, Sanders, Taylor & Tyner, Ornette, Elvin Jones, Ayler. Kopinski's of Polish descent, though far enough back to have lost any trace of outlander's inflection, unless you count an ordinary Nottinghamshire accent outlandish (some of you Londoners apparently do feel just that, as we'll see later). He only got back to Poland this year. To find his own attitudes to the Man independently duplicated there. It must get into the blood.

"I knew they'd had Bop and all that stuff, but Coltrane is the figure because of that intense feeling you get out of listening, it makes you feel kind of weepy sometimes, and you get all wound up listening to it. That's what it seems to be about over there."

This is a kind of spirituality that doesn't seem to appeal so much to English upper lips.

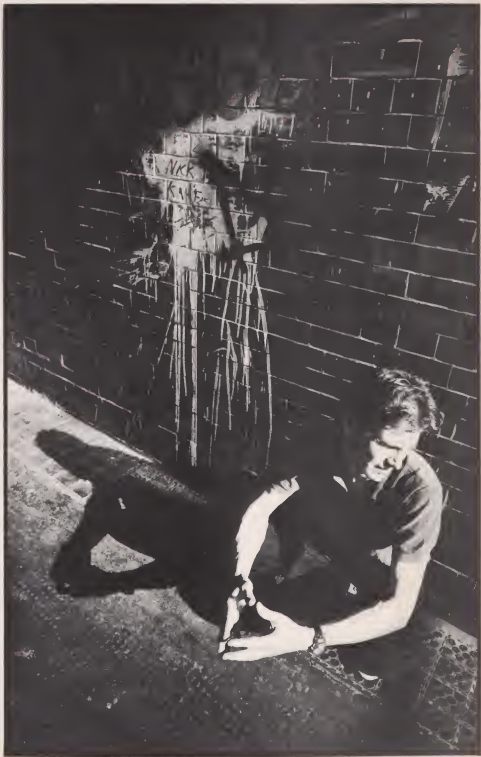
"This feeling I got from a lot of people over there, musicians and others, was that it's the amount of expression and emotional response they could get in and out of the music that seemed to turn them on. Rather than over here, where other things compound your response. Not just fashion and dressing right, but whether in fact you're playing within the tradition. Although when it comes to respecting the tradition, then they have to play a bit of history. Like the Dunkirk Jazz Festival Competition or something, otherwise they can't judge it, that's the same as everybody. And it's a bit boring."

THINGS THAT could reasonably irritate him mostly seem to afford him wry amusement. Like the endless comparisons with Prime Time, which he thinks are flattering but way off the mark. Actually lending a brief ear to *Speak* and in particular Nick Doyno Dittmas' quasi-Tacuma bass playing, it's hard not to be reminded of all things Harmolodic, an inextinguishably dense hum of challenging voices. But listening to the Zoo's development through *Doctor* and *The City Can't Have It Back*, more important structural and harmonic debts become apparent. To late Coltrane. And Sanders. And Ayler.

Obviously, lacking their context (coming out of Nottingham is very much coming out of nowhere), the facts of the times aren't going to invest these records with the same challenging drive that their '60s models had.

LIKE YOU DO?

Jan Kopinski gets mean in the streets



What was needed for these more pressing times was something to crack open the chaotically swirling surfaces of such freedoms. Coltrane died before he found it. Ayler and Sanders sensed a way, but never found the right help-mates. So it was left to Ornette, who'd started the whole thing anyway, and he found his way to the next step, Harmolodics. The harnessing of hard rhythm to clarify the texture, to focus the raging emotion. Well, maybe this is a bit glib, and much too neat. But the hostility to funk's bitter drive never made much sense. Drums have a song of their own to sing. Kopinski respects Ornette because he's still traveling, still searching.

"It's good that people rediscover Monk and Blakey and stuff like that, but to actually place restrictions on people like Ornette and Shannon Jackson, who were actually creating music in the '50s and '60s as well, it's so arrogant that I think it's almost laughable, if it didn't do so much harm."

Now there've been white imitators stealing black thunder before this. That's not in doubt. But it would be hard to be this churlish about a man who readily admits to a fondness for Ayler's *New Grass* and Sanders' *Love Will Find A Way*. Because he plainly just doesn't care about critical respectability. Further reasons to convince are more recent, the two new members, Anuradha Das, the (Indian) ex-punk percussionist, and Karl Bingham, the remarkable (black) virtuoso funk bassist, provide enough of different background, age and enthusiasm to make Pinski Zoo something special. Nonetheless, they'd be naive to suppose that they'll escape criticism of the course they seem to be taking. Kopinski talks with considerable excitement about a

move towards a more electronic and synthesized style, and the wild studio dub productions of Adrian Sherwood or Bill Laswell, the introduction of the robot drum-machine into this layered voice continuum. Which is, of course, just the territory that Shannon Jackson and Prime Time have been staking out.

It would have been more suitable to have interviewed all of the Zoo together. Might have been fun trying to transcribe it, especially if they talk in person the way they do on *Speak*: which is all together, multi-tracked irony, chuckling call/response, drifts and ebbings of simultaneous meaning. Of course, Doyne Ditmas has left since then, and Das and Bingham have joined. And the conversation is consequently sharper and darker. Kopinski's slowly reined in his unsupervised but attractively limber tenor squawk, and added alto and soprano, where he seems more naturally restrained. Steve Ilife has developed a naturally percussive sense on electric piano to allow for a thrilling flexing of runs and angles curling out and snapping back.

And Tim Bullock is working his hard-nosed free-range drumming into a superlative organizational ability. It's largely down to him that the others are able to hold back and still hold forth, and vice versa (ho, yes, very cute Mark, but it's true nonetheless). *Speak*'s clenched smouldering is being exchanged for a darker plane of splayed electric percussion – not yet mastered, but somewhere on the way.

If they do have to face hecking, it might be easier if they hadn't been made to feel so much in aesthetic quarantine. General critical misunderstanding hurts Kopinski a lot less than the mean-minded contempt meted out by musicians who ought to know better. He

speaks of the Free Jazz Community with a bitterness that surprised me, and outlined a confused story about a particular alto player which suggests that it isn't just the Trad Month that need their ideas shaking up a bit. But the arcane complexity of unspeakable laws still defies belief in this little little country, and jazz is utterly bound up in them. You can find out more about social barriers in ten minutes' discussion with as many musicians of diverse upbringing and career, than from a lifetime's study of sociology.

In order to get work in clubs, Kopinski, Ilife and Bullock have had to present themselves as a hard-bop trio, to "play the history". The "Jan Kopinski" trio. As if jazz can't survive without soloists yet. And because of audiences wedded to fashion (that includes jazz audiences), and fellow musicians wedded to narrow interpretations of history's motion, the Zoo find more to their liking the responses of audiences in Poland, or France: "It's down to things like the metro strike whether they turn up or not!" He's trying to get pianist Wojciech Kosiński, who'll be supporting them in Poland in October, to come over here, in the hope that promoters and audiences will be intrigued by the package. "He's really worth hearing. So I'll put him with us, because we're worth hearing as well!"

Wherever they come from, whatever their reasons, they don't need excuses. Hear it in the music. ●

DISCOGRAPHY

Introduce Me To The Doctor... (Despatch PATCH 0001)
Ozzy Dance Record (Dug-Out PWS 002)
The City Can't Have It Back (Dug-Out PWS 003)
Speak (Dug-Out PWS 005)

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ZWERIN

... IN CHANGING WEATHER

THE WEATHER on the Ile d'You is like Miles Davis, who once said: "I have to keep changing. It's like a curse."

Each day is like four or five different days — different seasons — on this French Atlantic island, to which there's no car ferry. You rent bikes. Riding out to the beach, a hefty breeze sprung up and looking up at the low-hanging black clouds where there had been a bright blue sky when I left the house 30 minutes earlier, I got the hit about Miles. That was early August. Six weeks later I'm still revising this thing. Trying to track down Miles is like a curse.

One dry day earlier last summer, an elderly horman waiting for rain said to me: "It's a shame Miles doesn't have anybody in his band to challenge him intellectually, somebody like Wayne or Coltrane."

I'd never thought of it before but it suddenly seemed obvious. "He needs physical challenge," I said. "Energy, youth. He has enough intellect." Miles always knows what he needs.

Spring and summer... Fresh licks got hard to come by when you pass 50. Worse, they're scary. Another old trooper whistles: "Time to call Rent-a-Lick." When your only new women are in love with their fathers, and performance is no longer secure, it's easy to conclude that you have found enough licks for a lifetime. Stay with the familiar, just try and keep it up. Plenty of rationalizations — tradition, perfection, loyalty. Raise your consistency. You're a veteran. Veterans thrive on predictable performance.

But Pissesso switched to a "Blue Period" at an advanced age. In his 60s, I believe it was, Stravinsky began to write serial music which he had publicly abhorred all his life. He was not professional. Professionals tend to play golf not music after 50, around which age Miles said: "Don't play what you know, play

what you don't know."

As far as I can see from the dank Parisian hole to which I have returned from that clear, windy isle, only three people involved with the improvised music called jazz have braved what they don't know after 50: Miles, Gil Evans and Ornette Coleman. All moved towards what is called "rock" or "funk." A financial or an artistic move? The motivation really doesn't matter; they moved into stormy weather, not calm seas.

Let me tell the youngbloods out there that once you hit 50, you learn to appreciate the familiar. When your ten-year-old kid takes 15 minutes to figure out a computer program you've been totaled by for days, it's tempting to say "fuck computers."

Somebody once said that all new ideas go through three phases — the joke, the threat and the obvious. The synthesizer is obvious to a 20-year-old, but it can be a threat to a fiftyish pianist who has lost his sense of humour about unfamiliar weather. The sun belt beckons.

I REMEMBER watching Gil Evans 15 years ago, when he was only 58, sitting with earphones at his synthesizer in the apartment on Rue de l'Université he had rented from the lady who is now my wife. His two young children were screaming and chasing each other while his wife cooked dinner in the same room. I hate to throw another elucidation at you but a friend of mine says: "Happiness is concentration."

Gil at that moment was the perfect illustration. He was concentrating on a Jimi Hendrix tune, out of time and context. Lots of people still considered both Hendrix and the synthesizer the enemy — you know, rock was killing jazz. The "true" jazzmen had circled their

wagons and were shooting at the rocking savages circling outside. Others became savages themselves. The other side of a counterfeit coin.

Gil made a fast tack, old timbers notwithstanding, went out to sea despite humane warnings. (Parenthetically, isn't it ironic that of all people Gil Evans is the one to preserve the music of Jimi Hendrix? It's kind of like Felix Mendelssohn with J.S. Bach.) The gods of weather do not need weathermen.

Ornette Coleman has confused forecasters for 30 years, and he's puzzled too. "I never could understand," he told me, "how scientists who design rockets can be interested in diatonic music. You would think they would be interested in music that was on the same expressive level as their own work."

Ornette moved into outer space, beyond weather. Like it or not, you've got to admit he's in thin atmosphere. "I've been looking for a sound that is inside human beings, the one that makes you well when medicine can't work," he said.

"You know anyone else looking for that sound?" I asked.

"Well, to tell you the truth," he answered: "I never thought that anybody was not doing that."

Which brings us back to Miles. Look, this may make you laugh but I take it seriously. Miles wears hats. For years there were no photos of Miles without his "Willie Nelson" cap or black fedora or something. Hiding his receding hairline, we all thought. You could be sure of one thing in this changing world: Miles Davis was going to wear a hip hat. Then all of a sudden he took it off. Bald or not, it was getting hot.

Peddling back from the beach on the Ile d'You, I tried fighting a strong headwind up a hill. I leaned my bike against the trunk of a tree and started to write this. And now finally it's finished. Well, almost. ●

continued from page 15

"Yeah, but they had to learn it too. Jazz singers weren't born like that. The problem with a lot of jazz things is it's a bit snooty — I was more worried about people saying (adopts sneering petanque voice) yeah, she's trying to be a jazz singer. But I'm not trying to be Ella Fitzgerald. I don't want to do scat singing, that's not my style. I still like the singing of Peggy Lee and Julie London."

"I want to be singing when I'm 40. There are some female singers around who I don't think'll be around in five years' time. But I would like to be singing with an orchestra at Caesar's Palace when I'm 40!"

"My history — like 'Cry Me A River' — has been in this vein anyway. I like really soft singing, and that's another thing you can't do in pop — sing quietly."

SINCE THE last time I saw her, morosely trudging through a TV pop routine, she looks a lot more chipper. The famous beehive long gone, a blonde snowdrop cut is offset by the razor creases of a classic black and white

outfit. Man still loves to dress up.

"I'm not doing any of my old songs. I didn't wanna do millions of standards 'cause then you're going to get the critics having a go. We do 'Reminiscing In Tempo', 'Zing Went The Strings Of My Heart', 'But Not For Me' — I wanted to do a song with every rhythm. I'd be quite happy to do a whole set of ballads but that's not very entertaining."

"I don't want to think about the singing too much. As a singer, I think you can learn too much and lose the feeling."

Ah — the potency of cheap music. Are there songs which make her cry?

"I suppose one is 'I'm Always Chasing Rainbows' — by both the people I've heard singing it, Al Jolson and Judy Garland. The new Sue Pollard single made me cry, but for totally different reasons! Yeah, and there's Julie London singing 'Lonely Girl'. One of the lines is 'He doesn't have to be especially handsome' — it's just the way she sings it."

"I know I'd be in for it, doing this, but I can't keep worrying about what people will say. I

wanted a proper unit — not like, oh, this is jazz, we won't get dressed up, we'll use anybody — I wanted it to have a showy element and a bit of excitement. I've had a couple of jazz buffs come up and criticise, which was fair, but I thought, well, I'm trying to get across to Mr Public. He's not thinking — was she a semitone out there?

"I mean," she smiles, "I think I'm quite a good performer. I think I've got it. We do 'A Child Is Born', and that's a really hard song to sing. Stuart said, ooh, let's do this and I said oh no! But we did it, and my legs were like — you know when you get your leg on the nerve? Up until last week I knew I hadn't got the song right. But then we did it in Greenwich last week and everything went great. People were really listening."

"That's what I really want. In the past, when I've talked to Judy Garland and it's given me goosebumps, that's what I want to do to people." There is a groan of dismay.

"Is this getting really serious and boring? I'll give you my shopping list in a minute. ●



Chushe Valdes - CLASS CLASH

CUBA!

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**SUE STEWARD
meets Chucho
Valdes and
Arturo Sandoval,
ambassadors
of Cuba's
explosive Latin
music, and
explains how –
in the wake of
their sensational
London shows –
these musicians
are bringing a
new heat to
homegrown
Cuban jazz.**

SINCE LAST year, London and Havana have become musical twin towns: last summer, the Cuban Ministry of Culture invited Ronnie Scott's Band to play at their Festival to celebrate 25 years since the Revolution. This year, in return, Ronnie Scott agreed to three week-long stints by three of Cuba's most prestigious bands, all more or less in the category of 'jazz'.

What began as a commonplace Festival Of Cuban Music, turned into an unexpected, sell-out blockbuster. The last of the three groups, Irakere, had their three weeks extended to five. An unprecedented word-of-mouth buzz showed how well established the grapevine is today; the club has been filled for eleven weeks, and Irakere's first last night's finale ran into an hour of encores.

The bond between England and Cuba has been further consolidated by a visit from a talent-scout rep from the Ministry of Culture, a man with a natty line in dark suits and dance steps, bearing the unlikely name of Jesus O'Reilly. What he liked of London's music will be invited to Havana next year. On Irakere's first night, O'Reilly led the audience in clapping patterns, grinning delightedly at his friends on stage, all slightly surprised to find themselves together in this small club so far from home.

The audiences have been as mixed and cross-sectional as any Festival crowd, but contained a strong element of hard core jazz fans, maybe keen to test their preconceptions of Latin music (almost as meaningless a term as 'black music') which tend to dismiss it uniformly as bland, repetitive and boring, lacking the true grit and hard improvisatory content of 'real jazz'. I doubt if anyone was prepared for the variety, the ingenuity, humour, virtuosity, and the soul of these musicians. That place SWUNG for 11 weeks. During that time, very different musical

styles caught the light – from one number to another. Almost the only common ground shared by the bands was a delight in improvisation, and a deeply ingrained passion for traditional and popular music of Cuba, which managed to crop up in unexpected places. Most surprising at first was the frequency of classical music references, particularly in the pianists – Chucho Valdes of Irakere, and Gonzalito Rubalcamba who led his own group. It's only surprising until you discover that the majority of players have studied at the Havana Conservatoire of Music and apprenticed in one of the orchestras. Within Latin music elsewhere, only Eddie Palmieri approaches such gleeful diversity, such command of so many styles.

Most of all, these were three jazz bands in the classic sense: jazz to breath life into body and soul, music to listen to and to move you, music which demands an easy virtuosity and great nerve, and draws on a shared memory bank of styles and recollections of a thousand standards.

Most significant of all, for me, this series has revealed something about Cuba's musical life, which at this distance is hard to discern. The impression is that successive exoduses for the US, of stars like Celia Cruz and the



Orchestra Matancera, Paquito D'Rivera (co-founder and saxophonist with Irakere) and congosero Daniel Ponce, have left Cuba devoid of musical talent; and that the remaining music scene is inferior to the newly invigorated mainland scenes.

Arturo Sandoval analysed it like this: "Salsa was invented by some clever people in America who wanted to block the Cubans out of the commercial market. With the use of the word 'salsa' they were trying to promote the idea that salsa is the modern, upmarket stuff, and that what is going on in Cuba now is passé, that there were no longer any good musicians in Cuba... so that way, they could corner the whole market with the brand of (mainland) Cuban music."

HE WENT on to explain how restricted technical resources, of both human and hardware, severely limits the output and quality. Musicians like these three bands, on the international circuit, tend to also record abroad: Puerto Rico, Chicago, Venezuela, and—in the case of Sandoval—Finland, live with Dizzy Gillespie (Pablo).

Evidence in growing to convince me that Cuban hills are still alive with the sound of music. But what does it sound like? Apart from this Festival, the recent album, "Viva! El Ritmo—Cuba bala!" Cuban Dance Music

(Earthworks) reveals the current dance music scene: a truly wonderful album's worth of assorted rhythms and degrees of "purity". Irakere's contribution, "El Teta", is the story of a legendary runaway slave who became a Maroon and a folk hero freedom fighter. Musically, the track typically disregards any notions of border control and slips easily between electronic whirrs, symphonic serenity, and minimal percussion and vocal encounters. Elsewhere on the record, there is salsa (regardless of Sandoval's analysis, Cubans clearly have developed a parallel version of what is known as salsa elsewhere) merengues, rumbas and sones, and it's an album which serves the function of a tantalizing sampler brilliantly, and explains the diversity that is Cuban music.

"CUBAN MUSIC has one root—Africa."

That unambiguous statement came from the Zairean guitarist/song writer Franco, in response to a question about the influence of Cuban dance music on the 'new rumba' sound he helped perfect. Franco had turned the question around: Cuban music was, of course, an adaptation of African forms in the first place.

I thought of Franco's assertion when I interviewed Chucho Valdes, leader of Irakere. I thought about it as I watched his band's explosive set: the Yoruba chant which accompanies a ferocious bata drum solo, communion with a spirit world understood from Cuba to West Africa alike. Afro-Cuban elements appear in his compositions all the time. I thought of it, too, when Chucho was discussing African languages still spoken outside Africa, with our translator Lucy Duran, when he revealed that Manding is still a daily language for some Cubans. He asked to hear recordings not of jazz greats, like Arturo Sandoval had, but of African drumming from the National Sound Archives collection which Lucy curates.

I asked Chucho what Irakere means, and his answer took me right back to Franco. "In

Yoruba, Irakere means 'forest'. The story of Irakere is oral tradition now. It comes from the time when drums were used to signal across the forest. The strongest drummer then was called Irakere, and when he died, they named that bit of the forest where he used to drum, Irakere. When we began to put an emphasis on Afro-Cuban music (in the 70s), it was very much based on drumming—and he was one of the great drummers..."

Chucho went on to explain that his interest in the African roots of Cuban music began around 1967 while he was pianist for the Orquesta Teatro Musical de Havana, and he formed a sub-group within the orchestra, which moonlighted with popular and traditional Cuban music. From that group which also featured Arturo Sandoval, guitarist Carlos Morales and singer Oscar Valdes, are still part of Irakere. The final number of their set today, "Black Mass—Chaka (fire)" dating from 1973, is a legacy of that period. It's a contemporary, symphonic journey through Cuba's musical history, including outside influences from Europe and the US, and following deep into the roots of the Afro-Cuban people.

A centrepiece is the magical bata drum solo by Oscar Valdes, whose crisply defined melodies are picked up by the congas, split across three drum heads and traded with the bass. Into this deep reverie bursts a triumphant and unrepentant hot horn blast, breaking the spell with a snatch of "In the Mood" style swing... Glenn Miller, a favourite of Chucho's since childhood radio airings, is a frequent companion to his composing hand; elsewhere fragments of Geršwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" make an appearance.

Following on from the Theatre Music orchestra, Chucho, Arturo and others moved into the Orquesta Cubana de Musica Moderna, whose repertoire broadened from just classical music. "It was a very interesting group because we had to make music for films and plays in a lot of very different styles. It was very demanding musically." Thinking of musicians like Ennio Morricone and Lindsay Cooper, whose training and skills as improvisers have certainly added an extra quality to their film scores, I asked what kind of films they have soundtracked: "All Cuban films between 69 and 74!" he laughed, somewhat shocked himself. "We were the Orquesta of the Cuban cinema, and we did every film made in Cuba then. Not as Irakere, but depending on the score, it was different musicians from the Orquesta of Modern Music... and they always needed a piano."

This enforced versatility shows in their playing today, and explains Chucho Valdes' extensive range. Arturo Sandoval, who parted from Irakere to form his own band in 1980, has clearly found close to the jazz wind. Where Chucho cites Art Tatum, Dave Brubeck, Herbie Hancock and McCoy Tyner as influences and a fanatical passion for Glen Miller, Sandoval mentions only one name: Dizzy Gillespie. It was hearing Gillespie which turned him away from piano to trumpet—a step he never regrets. In another life, he says he would start straight with the horn.

Musical differences forced the two men apart after so long. Previously, those differences must have been stimulations, and judging by the way the two men causally and respectfully mention each other in conversation, relations are still harmonious. It was noticeable that neither man mentioned

the name of Paquito D'Rivera, co-founder of Irakere with them, and until his departure in 1980 a central feature of the band's sound. 1980 was clearly a decisive year for Chucho Valdes, who had to carry on the band without two of its key contributors.

SANDOVAL EXPLAINS the musical differences which forced his move: "I play jazz. Irakere is a mixture. If people are looking for dance music, they don't go to hear me! Whereas Irakere recently are playing more and more dance music, which is one of the principal reasons I left them. I played dance music for many, many years—nearly 15" (he groaned and pulled a face).

"I studied very hard to learn, going through agonies to learn those technically very difficult passages. And then we would go and play them, and nobody was listening! They were only interested in looking at the girls and drinking beer. After a while, people who go to dances become so alienated from you, so involved in what they are doing and their drink, we could be the London Philharmonic."

Jazz audiences are the people he aims at: "The jazz public is very demanding, very knowledgeable, and the same everywhere. At Ronnie's a journalist asked me what I thought of the audience, and I said it's just the same—in Cuba, it's the same reaction at the same moment, to the same thing."

Sandoval's performances couldn't be further removed from Irakere. A tight 6-piece with him as leader, comic, main soloist, compere and it's strictly a "jazz outfit". The personal styles of these two leaders are particularly different: Sandoval, speedy, exuberant, exhibitionist, with a bombastic sense of humour which infuses the whole show, and a slightly frantic air as he rushes from trumpet to piano to timbales to mel. Yet everything he plays, he plays with a personal style, from his fast-fingered, high note trumpet flares to a concise crisp timbales line (that could raise the heckles on Tito Puente) and his strenge scatting which is like an uncensored tape rewind of a trumpet solo.

Sandoval comes a distracted air, when off-stage. I can imagine he never sits down at home—only with the horn to his lips does he seem fully absorbed. And, of course, his playing style reflects this hyperactivity: someone described him as using 400 notes where Miles would have used one.

The duet with Dizzy Gillespie on Pablo features some extraordinary combinations of jew's harp and trumpet, of twinned trumpets, and here, the influence of his mentor shows through in the flurries and spirals solos which disappear off into a break in the clouds. There are even some calm moments of reflection, which were rare in the live show.

NOTHING COULD be further from Chucho Valdes' stage personality or playing style. A gentle, tell man who stoops slightly over his keyboard, who plays mostly with his head down, but who commands utterly the flicks and turns of the music from his piano stool. In many pieces, the main business of the music is carried by the dense interweave of his 12-piece band (horns, percussion, guitar, bass, drums, singers) and he concerns himself with rather inconspicuous enbroderings with the high note rches which, once heard, distract you completely from the rest of the music.

Chucho's family background was completely musical, with father in a popular dance band, mother playing piano and singing, aunts fighting each other over Chopin and Debussy. Chucho's own family (of seven) are similarly a diverse big band who enjoy home music sessions when all the relations descend. With that mixture of age groups, obviously he has always been exposed to the popular and serious music of the day – and that is what is most characteristic of both his playing and his compositions. The latest album *Groupe Irakere* (Egrem/Sonodisc) features half the album's worth of music by one of Cuba's legendary composers, the blind tres player (that's a six-stringed guitar-like instrument, imitated in Irakere by electric guitar) Arsenio Rodríguez; familiar to all Cubans, I'm sure, but merely springboards for their own 1980s interpretations. Chucho places most gratitude for his uniquely diverse style on his teacher, a woman called Semayra Romeu, whose brother directed the first Orchestra to employ Chucho, and whose uncle Antonio Maria Romeu was the creative force behind the development of the danzon, which put some langorous syncopation into the staid courtly European dance of the same name. It laid the foundations for today's flute-and-violin ensembles, the charangas, and the universal dance hit, the chachacha.

Today, Chucho teaches improvisation at the Havana Conservatoire – a far cry from the strictly European classical training he was restricted to there. Amongst his students, he has already spotted a future talent in a 15-year-old pianist. I get the impression that Cubans have more musicality in them than any other people: "the people are exceptionally musical. They receive musical messages with great facility."

THE THIRD band to grace Ronnie Scott's stage was also led by a pianist – a 22-year-old prodigy called Gonzalo Rubalcaba who brought his Group Project, a young band who revealed a total schizophrenia in two completely different sets. By night, Group Project are a fairly straight-down-the-line, very competent jazz band with minimal references to their Cuban roots. Gonzalo, a lanky, relaxed young man with long, light fingers, is a piano player who already has more personal style than his years would indicate. His touch is silky, his tone is delicate, and unlike Chucho Valdes, who is often linked with McCoy Tyner, he does not play to cover with splashes of dense colour, but relishes silence too.

At an afternoon press show, we witnessed a very different Group Project, where the band decided to reveal their Cuban faces: and the music swooped between rumbas and danzones. If he were to follow Irakere's course, then inevitably he would eventually fuse the two halves: I suspect Rubalcaba, who is already part of the international touring circuit, will find himself somewhere completely different. His is a name to watch out for.

When discussing upcoming new talents and styles, Chucho Valdes was predictably proud of his island's tradition for producing legendary influentials, and in his view that process continues undiminished. "It's important to note that a lot of rhythms that have developed this century have not been folkloric as such, but have been created, and evolved out of different traditions. Sometimes we play just pure folkloric rhythms, but a lot of

the time we are making a fusion of rhythms, of jazz and rock too. And every day there are at least two new rhythms..."

It makes England seem like a very dull place indeed.

Special Thanks to LUCY DURAN for translating these interviews with Arturo Sandoval and Chucho Valdes.

To the National Sound Archives for allowing us space to conduct them.

To Jorge Valdes of the Cuban Embassy for making them possible.

And to Earthworks for introducing British audiences to Cuban music through their release of "Viva! El Ritmo – Cuba Baila!"

cubana be -
cubana bod



Arturo plays freestman

CHIEF CLANK

Records mentioned in this article and of interest

Group Irakere: *Le Chemin de la Colline* (EGREM/Sonodisc)
 Dizzy Gillespie and Arturo Sandoval: *To A Fintand Station* (Pablo)
 Gonzalo Rubalcaba y su Grupo Projecto: *Jazz Plaza 65* (Areito)
 Arsenio Rodríguez y Su Magia: *La Musica Afro-Cubana* (Caliente)
 Jorge Reyes (bass player with Arturo Sandoval's band): *Pocito 11* (EGREM)
 Paquito D'Rivera band, including Daniel Ponce, Claudio Roditi, Carlos Franzetti, Steve Bailey, Ignacio Berroa: *Live at Keystone Corner* (CBS)





**CHET
BAKER**

WALKING ON EGGSHELLS

RICHARD COOK sings the ballad of the sad young man who still blows the sweetest trumpet and sighs the gentlest songs;
GERARD ROUY talks to the musician himself in an exclusive interview.

CHET BAKER — he's a problem for us. Jazz fans love to bestow mystic status on their favourites, and the troubles Baker has endured in a 40-year career encourage all the temptations of star-crossed legend. He blows a trumpet and sings, two voices of cardinal frankness, and every bar speaks of a sad gaiety, a melancholy poetry. Even at his most careless, Chet finds something pretty to say. But a bitter shadow never leaves him.

Each solo (once the despair of record producers) is less the 'man walking on eggshells' than someone forlornly juggling them. Baker's trumpet sound has a native hesitation: his dilemma, which he has made into the core of his art, is being a secretive improviser who nevertheless plays nakedly. He pushes himself through the hoops. He plays quietly, even whisperingly, but there is a strain and grim candour in his technique which implants great tension. He plays open, in a guarded way.

It's that implication which keeps Baker's music cooking, over every casual record date and club set. Although the pleasure in his work is even, small and precious, the possibility of collapse keeps it wired up.

35 years ago he was a very young white bebop trumpeter, one in a forest. Perhaps he had lucky breaks — his meetings with Parker and Gerry Mulligan seem like chance footnotes in history, further facets of the legend — but he became brilliantly popular for his tender, slowly skipping sound and his sculpted cheekbones and eyes and hair. In the famous quartet with Mulligan, he sounds like a sparrow next to the grumbling yardbird of the baritone. When he began singing on records, his voice proved to be exactly the feckless college-boy croon we expected.

His albums for Riverside and the records he made in Europe after leaving Mulligan justifiably became collectors' classics. In his first mature period, Baker had the confidence of a young favourite operating in the skin of a shy gentleman. His tragic association with the pianist Dick Twardzik — who died of an overdose in Paris — put a blur on his brightness: the sides he cut for Blue Star a few days after Twardzik's demise are numb with sadness. But in a set like the recently reissued *Jazz At Ann Arbor* (Pacific Jazz PJ 1203) he shows how he could play carefully and still bubble with subtle strokes and inflections.

When his popularity began to dwindle, and junk took its cruel toll, Baker's career went into the kind of tailspin which — with romantic

hindsight – looks like noble adversity. In fact, he worked through the late 50s and 60s, although his records were few in number. His singing became occasional, and his playing contexts became lugubriously mainstream. Baker's trumpet skills were never graded on virtuosity. His book of small gestures sounds forced in the quartet with George Coleman which produced a series of Prestige albums in the 60s.

IN RECENT years, turning fifty, working constantly in Europe and recording dozens of sessions, Chet Baker has distilled his own history in a way that lives up to that 'legend' – the broken young man – without living off it. A lot of the LPs, for small labels and in indifferent company, might seem like favours for other people, but the offhand nature of Chet's approach disguises how tough he's become in living with himself. The best of this later music is the best music of his career.

When I last saw him play, he sat quietly in a chair, head bowed, face hardly ever raised to the level of the audience. He nodded slightly in time to his own beat. He sings two or three songs in every set, maybe "My Ideal" or "This Is Always". Whatever, it's inevitably a gentle, sweet song. When he scats a chorus, his voice seems miraculously youthful again. It seems impossible that it could come from a face that's now heavily scored with lines, hidden behind big spectacles.

His trumpet has taken on a mature elegance. He chooses themes that he can work at patiently; he moulds melody as if thinking it through. A methodically tongued passage will slow up, stall for a moment, then gather new momentum in sudden rushes of notes. His silences can say as much as his sounds.

One of the best places to examine his recent work is the four-LP sequence he made for Steeplechase with guitarist Chuck Raney and bassist Nite Pedersen (*The Touch Of Your Lips*, *Daybreak*, *This Is Always*, *Someday My Prince Will Come*). He is suspended between two virtuosos, the pale lustre of his horn dipping and flickering between the strings. When he sings the first line of "The Touch Of Your Lips", the air almost melts around you. Listen to his treatment of "In Your Own Sweet Way": nobody has ever perceived Brubeck's Bobby in such a songful way.

In his latest LP for Steeplechase, *Diane*, he plays a series of duets with pianist Phil Bley. Performing beside Bley's starkness, Baker offers his slowest, most austere horn. There's almost no motion in the music: their meditations are on the edge of the drop into complete quiet. But in "If I Should Lose You" and "Every Time We Say Goodbye", Baker leans his love for a "pretty tune" into the grain of Bley's gruff chords and finds a desolate beauty.

Baker considers himself an entertainer, but he is as reluctant as ever to relinquish his

most personal thoughts. The interview which follows comes from a brief meeting with Gerard Rouy in Amiens earlier this year. The dry adolescent husk of a voice which, 30 years ago, told a heckler at Ann Arbor "We don't play 'In The Mood'", has become brittle with age. He sniffs constantly and rattles a coffee cup.

At one point, Rouy mentions Billie Holiday. Baker confesses to meeting her in a club in Chicago; and notes, merely, how she was "hounded to death by the police and those who insist on sticking their noses into everybody else's business". He sounds, at that moment, utterly weary. He's earned his privacy.

WHAT MEMORIES do you have of your meeting Charlie Parker?

Well, that was a long time ago. 1952. I have a lot of nice memories of playing and hanging out with Charlie Parker. I came home one day and there was a telegram to say that there was an audition with Charlie Parker, for two weeks at The Tiffany Club in Los Angeles. So I ran up there and went into the club. It was very bright outside, and when you went in it was very dark... and after about ten minutes I could see that every trumpet player in Los Angeles was there, you know. So Bird was playing with someone on the stand, and when they finished the tune he went up to the microphone and asked if I was in the audience. So I went up on the stand and we played two tunes, and he stopped the audition and said, I'm gonna hire Chet Baker. Thank you all for coming.

We played two weeks there, and then went to play in a club in San Francisco. Then we did some concerts up and down the West Coast for Gene Norman, all the way up to Vancouver. I got to know him pretty well. I was 22 years old and very nervous, and he tried to make me feel relaxed.

I was in Europe when he died, and, I don't know, it's hard to explain to people something like that. The average person doesn't know anything about Charlie Parker. They say, Charlie who? I think the musicians of today are maybe a hundred years ahead of the people who are listening to the music. I hope this doesn't get further and further apart. It depends on the ears and the ability of the people to understand what the music is, and I'm afraid the average person doesn't want to take the time to find out. They want to be hit over the head with a rock drummer and they're not interested in trying to think about the music too much. That's probably why jazz will sooner or later become a lost art. Everything will go electronic and people will make records by themselves with a synthesiser.

What do you think of Miles' music today?

As a trumpet player I can appreciate what Miles is doing today, but after two or three tunes it begins to get a little monotonous. I

don't think there's enough contrast in Miles' music today. I prefer his music of 20 years ago.

Miles was one influence on your playing, and some say Bix and Bobby Hackett were others. Is that true?

Not too much. I didn't listen too much to Bix. I would say my main influences have been modern trumpet players, Kenny Dorham, Miles and Dizzy... there were so many good players. Not so many today. For me, Bobby Hackett didn't reach far enough. He played the melody very nicely but there wasn't too much real improvisation, I don't think. He could play very pretty. That's what endeared him to many people, he played very simply. If I had to do that every night I'd be bored to death in a month's time. I'd take the trumpet and bend it over my knee.

I try and play differently every night. I played fluegelhorn for seven years from 1984, up until I had all my teeth pulled. I could never find a horn that I like, that played in time. This horn I have now is a Buescher, a little student horn. It plays in tune without having to do a lot of work and tipping it up and down. I've been playing it for four, five years now.

You were in Paris in 1961 when Bud Powell was playing at the Blue Note Cafe.

Of course, by that time Bud was already a little bit strange. Sometimes he'd play beautifully, and then in the middle of a tune he'd stop, stand up, look round, laugh, sit down and play again... it was very strange. Must've been difficult for people who didn't understand who or what he was. I think I met him for the first time in Birdland, in 1954, but I never played with him. He only played with a trio, not with any horn players.

I WAS a singer before I was a trumpet player. I'd been singing since I was 11, 12 years old... "That Old Devil Moon", "I Had The Craziest Dream" – that's an old tune. The sort of tunes you don't expect an 11-year-old to sing. I don't practice singing but it's a lot of fun. I look forward to doing it every night. But I continue to not be known as a singer.

If a producer asked you to make a record just as a singer, would you do it?

Yeah, I would. I'd like to do some multiple track things, singing five parts and putting them all together. Experiment like that. But I haven't had the chance.

Have you heard Bob McFerrin?

Yes. I think he's a good entertainer but not a good singer. I don't think he's got it together as far as improvising goes. Him and that other guy – Bob Jarreau? (I think he means Al Jarreau – Ed) The guy that made "Popsicle Toes". I don't think there's too many people improvising with their voices today. They work things out, like Ella Fitzgerald with her scatting, but it's so kindergartenish. And it's all worked out ahead of time and every time she sings that tune it's the same. That de-da-da-da-da thing, it's all the same (sighs). Betty Carter's a good singer, but I don't care for her

chet baker

too much (chuckles).

I don't listen to any music when I'm at home. When you're on the road and playing music every night, after two or three months I'm up to my hair with music. When I have some time off I don't wanna hear anything.

Do you have a regular band in the States?

For some years I was using Phil Markowitz and Bob Mover, from time to time, who's in Canada now. He's very underrated. People are always amazed when they hear him play. I've been using a drummer from New York named Leo Mitchell. I wanted to bring him to Europe this time, but nobody wants to spend money on transportation. I'd have to spend money out of my own pocket to bring him here, and I just haven't had it.

I don't like to hear a lot of banging on drums behind me when I play. Just that ahh-ch ahh-ch ahh-ch to keep time. And I don't really need that, because we have the time fixed inside us by this time. If we don't we'd better just peck up our horns and forget it.

I may have to play in New York, at the club Lush Life, without drums. The Fire Department is trying to close the club up, and the Noise Abatement people come in with their machines to measure the noise. So he's got all these people on his back — and the owner said, well, you may have to play without drums. I said, well, that's no problem. I've been doing it in Europe for eight years. And yet right across the street from there are four places with rock bands.

I don't have the kind of chops to be able to play a lot of volume for two hours in a row. I like to be able to play very softly and use the microphone.

Are you going to do any more work with strings or with a big band?

I'm supposed to be working with the pianist Mike Melillo in Italy, a series of concerts. That's with 60 strings. And Richie Beirach is looking for all the most beautiful ballads he can find to make an album. I have a lot of possibilities — I'm supposed to do an album in Japan. Timeless Records want me to do three albums. There's six that could be done this year.

When I'm in the States people suggest this and that. But nobody wants to pay any money. After 40 years in this business it's not too flattering when people come and say, well, we want to do an album — and they offer me a thousand dollars. I just look at them like they're crazy. And tell them I'm sorry. I'll make an album if it's a small label that's just starting, like I did for Timeless. But they'll have to come up with some money if they want to do another one. Because I don't have too many years to go, you know. Maybe, uh . . . oh, who knows?

I don't know, really, what the future does hold. I used to work a lot more in Germany, say, but since the dollar's got so strong . . .

Music's like the first thing people cut out of their spending. ■



JACQUES



Harrison Birtwistle

CONTEMPORARY CLASSICS

MAX HARRISON previews *Music of Eight Decades* and other upcoming new music.

WITH SIX performances of Stockhausen's 'Donnerstag aus Licht' at Covent Garden in September behind us, with the electro-acoustic marvels of the Institut de Recherche et Co-ordination Acoustique/Musique de Paris series at St John's in October already just a memory, it almost looks as if this winter were going to be a good one for contemporary music in London. Just about to start is the third of the BBC's *Music of Eight Decades* sequences, with four concerts by the London Sinfonietta and four by the BBC Symphony Orchestra. These have been planned with much imagination by Robert Ponsosby, retiring Controller of Music at the BBC, and Michael Vyner, Artistic Director of the Sinfonietta. They offer a rich, some might say intoxicating, mixture of completely new works and established twentieth-century classics.

The first, by the London Sinfonietta conducted by the composer Oliver Knussen, is on October 30th at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, and the series runs until next June. This opening programme includes the world premiere of Colin Matthews's 'Suns Dance' and the first British performance of Charles Wuorinen's 'Canzona'. Also present will be Peter Maxwell Davies's 'Revelation and Fall', a piece that makes a garish theatrical impact and should provide a noticeable contrast with the sober serial ingenuities of Stravinsky's *Septet* and the exquisite beauty of Webern's *Songs Op.13*.

After that we have to wait until December 3rd, when the Festival Hall will see Elgar Howarth guiding the BBC SO through the world premiere of York Holier's *Piano Concerto*, to which must be about his first piece not to use electronics, and the British premiere of Bernard Rands's 'Le Tambourin'. As before, these are supported by older pieces, Lutoslawski's 'San Francisco Polyphony' and Ravel's 'La Valse'.

The other Matthews, David, brother of Colin (see above), is represented on December 11th at the Festival Hall by 'In the Dark Time', which is another world premiere. Mark Elder conducts the BBC SO in this concert, which opens with the youthful George Benjamin's 'Ringed by the Flat Horizon' and also includes Bartók's harshly percussive, almost threatening, *Piano Concerto No.2* and Ives's irreverent 'Fourth of July'.

So it continues. On January 29th 'Riverrun'

by the Japanese composer Takemitsu has its world premiere from the BBC SO under David Atherton. Bartók again provides back-up with his ballet music for 'The Wooden Prince' and the concert begins with Messiaen's 'Chronochrome'. That is in the Festival Hall, but for March 5th the scene changes to the Queen Elizabeth Hall next door for more Messiaen, namely the 'Sept Haïkas'. This comes between the world premiere of Robert Saxton's 'Chamber Concerto: Circles of Light' and the UK premiere of 'Les Courants de l'Espace' by Tristan Murail, whose 'Désintégrations' made him one of the heroes of the IRCAM series. Dallapiccola's 'Canti di Prigionia' ends this heavyweight programme.

Back to the Festival Hall on March 14th for Stravinsky's 'Threni', an amazing piece, ascetic and fantastically imaginative at the same time. Peter Ebdon conducts the BBC SO in this, adding the first British performance of Zimmermann's 'Dialogue' and the world premiere of a new piece by Harrison Birtwistle the title of which has not yet been decided. The remaining concerts of the 'Eight Decades' series are at the Queen Elizabeth Hall on April 2nd and June 4th. The former includes the UK premiere of the disconcertingly named 'Chain 2', in which the London Sinfonietta will be conducted by the composer, Witold Lutoslawski. Diego Masson takes over for Abramson's 'Märchenbilder'. Fernyough's 'Cancieri d'Invenzione I' and Schoenberg's Chamber Symphony No.1. Another as yet unnamed piece, by James Dillon, starts the final programme, in which Lothar Zagrosek conducts the Sinfonietta. This will continue with Boulez's 'Dérive', Maderna's Oboe Concerto and Xenakis's 'Thalain'. Altogether this series should provide a liberal education in what is, and has been, happening in contemporary European composition. And every concert will be broadcast.

ADVANCED WARNING might as well also be given of some further concerts which, as they are from the BBC, will be equally available to on-the-towners and tuned-in stay-at-homes. First there is a series of invitation concerts at the BBC Maida Vale Studios, Deleware Road, London W.9. On November 3rd Paavo Berglund conducts the first British performance of

Kokkonen's Symphony No.4. On December 7th Roman Jablonsky will be the soloist in Penderecki's Cello Concerto No. 1 under Antoni Wit. And on February 22nd Peter Ebdon conducts the UK premiere of Hughes du Four's 'Antiphysis' and the world premiere of Christoph Delz's Piano Concerto with the composer at the keyboard. In each case the orchestra is the BBC SO, and concerts start at 7 pm. Admission is free, but you should get a ticket first by writing to the BBC Ticket Unit, Broadcasting House, London W1A 1WW.

Two further outstanding BBC concerts for next year should also be noted, though more details will be given in this space nearer the time. One is on March 22nd and consists of the first local performance of Tippett's 'The Mask of Time' since it was heard at the Proms last year. The composer will talk about this piece before the concert. Secondly on March 26th we shall have the first British hearing of Tabeaux 3, 7 and 8 of Messiaen's 'St François d'Assise'. Both of these events are at the Festival Hall.

Although they have eaten up most of the space this month, the BBC's activities are only the tip of the iceberg where contemporary music in London is concerned. On November 7th at St James's, Piccadilly, for example, Jonathan Higgins and Robert Bridge offer piano duet versions of Stockhausen's *Klavierstücke VII-IX* together with items by Debussy, Zimmermann and Hindemith. Nor does the Arts Council Contemporary Music Network confine its attention to the likes of Anthony Braxton and, er, George Russell. On November 27th at St Pancras Parish Church, for instance, they have John Lubbock conducting the Orchestra of St John's in Schoenberg's Chamber Symphony No.2, Peter Maxwell Davies's *Sinfonia Concertante*, and Mark Lubosky soloing in Schnittke's Violin Concerto No.2. A programme in the New Macnaughten Concerts 'Close to the Edge' series deserves attention. This is at St John's on December 3rd, and besides 'Sequence' by Jean Barraqué, André Hodeir's great hero, it also features three pieces by Bill Hopkins, Barraqué's English protégé. There will be some meticulously determined sounds here, and the rare chance of hearing anything of Barraqué's ought not to be missed. The performances will be by Music Projects/London under Richard Bemas ●



Laurie Anderson

BOOKS

ALL-AMERICAN MUSIC: COMPOSITION IN THE LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY by John Rockwell (Kahn & Averill, £6.95)

WHEN DAVID Del Tredici composed the marvelous *Final Alice* in the 1970s on a National Endowment for the Arts commission, he was already aware that the world of contemporary 'serious' music had more than slightly Lewis Carrollish fringes. Orchestras would only take on major new works if they could hide behind 'world premiere' prestige or if the commission were hefty enough – Tredici's was part of the Bicentennial series – to make the occasion greater than the work or the performance.

Tredici had as much to fear from his composing peers. *Final Alice* was a largely tonal work, though hardly a conventional one, and the prevailing orthodoxy followed a flip-flop logic from orthodox serialism to halber experimentalism. A whisper of tonality, unless it were within the static harmonics of minimalism, was apt to bring down a hail of insult: conservatism, sell-out, commercialism. "For my generation it is considered vulgar to have an audience really, really like a piece on a first hearing. But why are we writing music except to move people and to be expressive? To have what has moved us move somebody else? Everything is reversed today. If a piece appeals immediately, sensuously, if an audience likes it: all those are 'bad things'. It is really very Alice in Wonderland."

John Rockwell closes his chapter on Del Tredici with the quote and it is clear that he shares its essential viewpoint. Certainly he is more than a little suspicious of the ultra avant-garde of the likes of Milton Babbitt, whose work is almost conceptual in its mathematical purity and rigour, and of Cage, whose work simply does not sound good (to Rockwell... and when it sounds at all).

All-American Music is a consciously ironic title. Rockwell opens with the work of Ernst Krenek, one of the important composers to emigrate to the USA in the 1930s and part of a generation that tightened the grip of Teutonic values – or those of Vienna at least – on young American composers striving to create a new American music by means of a new understanding of French styles. From that point, he examines the development, not of a 'native style', but of a whole pattern of styles that draw on every available source, East and West, native and imported.

The approach is nothing if not eclectic. "There are those who will never accept the notion that Neil Young can be discussed alongside Elliott Carter... But he can be; I do it, here." And Keith Jarrett alongside John Cage, Ralph Shapey and the Art Ensemble of Chicago; Stephen Sondheim gets no less serious attention than Fredric Rzewski or Babbitt. Laurie Anderson, Eddie Palmieri, Max Neuhaus, Ornette, David Behrman, Bob Ashley, Walter Murch, the ubiquitous Philip Glass and Talking Heads all merit a chapter.

Rockwell isn't happy with labels – 'transcendental primitivism' is a particular shocker – but there is nothing whatever pretentious in his account of each figure and his or her (Laurie Anderson's) wider context. In each case, he looks at issues broader than musical ones: commissions, orchestras, recording companies and contracts, critics, the total apparatus of music rather than merely the notes on a score. He contrasts the insiders who make the apparatus work – Glass, Sondheim, Jarrett and (yes) Cage – with outsiders like Shapey and Ornette, the politically committed like Rzewski and the out-and-out ivory tourists like Babbitt. Above all, he gives a sense without recourse to the higher reaches of metaphor of what the music sounds like, the salient omission in most music books.

Of all the arts, music is the most potentially responsive to its history and at the same time the only one that can all but completely wipe the slate clean and start afresh. Rockwell clearly accepts the motto of Ezra Pound, who followed it in poetry by cannibalising the work of two millennia in a dozen languages: "MAKE IT NEW". The stress on individualism is at the heart of all of Rockwell's judgements, with that same sense of the need to use history rather than be used by it which is the essence of any innovator.

He sees music as part of society, mediated and complicated by it, not as some vast impersonal cultural force. He quotes Cage with approval, for all his doubts about the man's work: "Our intention is to affirm this life, not to bring order out of chaos, not to suggest improvements in creation, but, simply, to wake up to the very life we're living, which is so excellent once one gets one's mind and one's senses out of its way and lets it act of its own accord." Rockwell at least recognises that music's own accord still has to chart the shoals of funding and the performing musicians' union.

It is Elliott Carter who perhaps best sums up the mood of the best available book on twentieth-century American music. Carter says: "I soon began to realise that whatever American character my music had would be the character of myself making music. I came to realise America is itself being created right here before us, moment by moment, combining its sometimes perplexing unwillingness to consider the past with its good-natured generosity and idealistic hope for the future. To chart a cultural development here, it seemed to me, was a waste of time, while what was and is important is to make the present, with all its connections to the past and anticipation of the future, exist more powerfully than either of these."

Brian Morton

PLAYLIST

COLOUR BOX Colour Box (4AD)

CHARLES MINGUS The Black Saint

And The Sinner Lady (Impulse)

NEW ORDER Low-life (Factory)

STEVIE WONDER Talking Book (Motown)

ROBERT WYATT Nothing Can Stop Us (Rough Trade)

HUSKER DU New Day Rising (SST)

ANTHONY BRAXTON Creative Music Orchestra (Arista)

OLIVER NELSON The Blues and the

Abstract Truth (MCA/Impulse)

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CLARK TERRY Swahili (Emergy)

CHARLIE ROUSE Merci Bon Dieu (Blue Note)

CURTIS FULLER JAZZTET Wheatleigh Hall (Arista)

MONGO SANTAMARIA Bacoso

(Fantasy)

FREDDIE HUBBARD Open Sesame (Blue Note)

ART PALMER Mau Mau (JSC)

CLIFFORD BROWN Georges Dilemma (Fontana)

RAY BARRETTO Espiritu Libre

(London)

ART BLAKEY Atracaine (Blue Note)

HERBIE MANN I'll Remember April (Verve)

... From the turntable of **TIM CLERRIS**
CANNONBALL ADDERLEY Somethin'

Else (Blue Note)

WALT DICKERSON For My Son

(Steepchase)

KEVIN EUBANKS Opening Nights

(GRP)

GANELIN TRIO Catalogue (Leo)

ABDULLAH IBRAHIM Ekaya (Ekapa)

ABDULLAH IBRAHIM/CARLOS WARD

Live at Sweet Basil (Ekapa)

LEE MORGAN Delightful (Blue Note)

SONNY ROLLINS Way Out West

(Bopcity)

JOHN SURMAN Upon Reflection (ECM)

KEITH TIPPETT Mujician (FMP)

... from the turntables of **MARTIN**

PHILLIPS (Devonair Radio)

("JAZZ IS... Tuesdays between 8pm-9pm Devonair 95.8 MHz VHF stereo.)

NESUHI ERTEGUN:

a big gun goes for the pirates

NESUHI ERTEGUN predicted Doomsday between sets in the musicians' bar at the Montreux Jazz Festival: "If something isn't done about it, piracy and private copying are going to put us all out of business and in ten years there will be no recorded music left to tape."

"Pirates in Singapore refuse orders for less than a containerload, 180,000 cassettes. 40% of all cassette sales in Italy are pirates, in Turkey it's 95%. About 40 million pirate cassettes are imported by Saudi Arabia each year. In Indonesia, a country of 140 million people, pirating records is not illegal. And now consumers can buy two-deck cassette machines which can copy one from the other at high speed."

The son of a Turkish diplomat, Ertegun grew up in Switzerland, Britain, France and the United States. Settling in New York in the '50s, he and his brother Ahmet founded Atlantic Records. Nesuhi produced more than 200 jazz albums, including *My Favorite Things* by John Coltrane, *Mingus' Pihicantropus Erectus*, *Ornette Coleman's Change Of The Century* and at least 20 by the Modern Jazz Quartet.

When Warner Communications bought Atlantic, Ertegun became a vice president of that organization, and for 15 years he has been chief operating officer of WEA, its international arm. Last year he became president of the International Federation of Phonographic Industries (IFPI), fighting what he calls "unauthorized duplication."

So he travels half each year speaking to lawyers, senators, managers, ministers and presidents, while reminiscing about "that world," the world of Mingus and Coltrane. The switch to the world of international finance was "very hard for me at first."

The previous set had been by the Dirty Dozen Brass Band, a group of young blacks from New Orleans who play modern styles with their marching band instrumentation. The interview was interrupted as Ertegun complimented their manager. They exchanged cards and before parting, Ertegun said: "Don't forget to call me."

"Don't worry," the manager replied: "I won't forget."

Ertegun is a powerful man, one of the highest placed music lovers in the music industry. He interrupted the interview to listen to the Modern Jazz Quartet. "Aren't they amazing?" he exclaimed afterwards: "John is playing better than ever."

THIS ERUDITE man who speaks four languages and attends jazz festivals as much for pleasure as business, was wearing a sports shirt with a "Cosmos" logo over the heart. He had been instrumental in Warner's decision to found that New York soccer team: "I ran the club. I signed Pelé," he said with the

same proud smile he flashed later, saying: "We just signed Mies Davis. It's a good move for us. I'll be pleased to be working with him."

Fifteen years ago, Warners had minimal international distribution. Ertegun signed unknown or under-exposed artists, hired smart local partners and executives and while Warner's Atari division was losing a billion dollars, "Without wishing to sound immodest, WEA has passed most of its competitors. It is a profitable operation."

But most of his time now is involved with industry problems. For example, Japanese record stores rent records for home taping: "The IFPI lobbied for a law forbidding that and one was finally passed. But it covered only Japanese product, imported records can still be rented. Now we are lobbying against that."

Hong Kong was home port for pirates in the '70s. When the Federation's lobbying succeeded there, they moved to Singapore: "Recently we got word that a container of pirate cassettes was being shipped from Singapore to Nigeria. We alerted the Nigerian government and the shipment was intercepted. But for every one you seize, maybe ten get through. The industry—record companies, publishers, artists—is losing billions of dollars a year because of these criminals."

A pirate makes mass unauthorized duplications of released records, without studio, royalty or other overhead expenses. Pirate product sells at about a third the price of the original. Third World officials tell Ertegun: "You're right. We're stealing. But if we have to pay the list price we can't afford to buy your records anyway." It's a tough argument.

In developed countries the problem is home taping. Ertegun wants a surcharge on blank cassettes to help balance lost income. He gives press conferences at least once a week, he has talked to French Minister of Culture Jack Lang and US Secretary of State George Schultz about pirating and home taping. And most recently, "I've been trying to convince artists to contribute a percentage of their royalties to help us fight the problem. Their creations are being stolen. George Benson just announced that he would be the first to do it."

But some artists wonder how much of any surcharge would reach them, and how do you decide who gets how much? In his publication *Jazzletter*, lyricist Gene Lees writes: "Little kids with tape recorders worry me less than big companies with accountants... The laws of the marketplace should be allowed to operate, and the industry permitted to collapse. After its collapse, imaginative artists and entrepreneurs will build a new and far healthier music industry."

Meanwhile, Ertegun sighs after a strong set by Jack DeJohnette: "I'm thinking of producing again, of starting my own label. Jazz records are viable if you control costs. I really love that music." ●

Nesuhi: "I'm a good guy—honest"



MIKE ZWERIN
talks to the
corporate giant
who hasn't
forgotten to love
the music.



DAVID COMO

NO DOUBT that Michael Nyman's music belongs at the far end of the Wire Spectrum. Unlike fellow composer Gavin Bryars, who lost the improvising faith in the 1970s, Nyman has never been entirely at ease in a jazz or improvising idiom.

"I need my notes and chords in front of me. Like anyone else, I can doodle, but I wouldn't produce anything worthwhile."

Ironically, on the day we met Nyman was still mulling over the concert he had given two nights before as part of the Bloomsbury Festival. The unlooked-for lineup on that occasion had added two out-and-out improvisors, Evan Parker and Dagmar Krause, to the two-piano nucleus provided by John Lenehan and Nyman himself.

The Nyman fens in the hall had been intrigued but, you felt, a trifle restive as "Water Dreams", the standout piece on the newly released EG album *The Kiss And Other Movements*, received the full Parker treatment. Most of them were still reeling at that point from the first half, the haunting and increasingly ferocious "Taking a Line for a Walk", specially commissioned for the Festival and featuring Dagmar in top gear.

Nyman seemed uncharacteristically anxious – for a man who nowadays shrugs off reviews and who belts out of the room if anyone puts on one of his albums – to canvass reactions. His admiration for both Parker and Krause seems considerable and unfeigned but it's clear that "not my usual sort of thing at all" had set him back on his heels not a little. (For the record, the audience were quickly won and the contrast between the recorded "Water Dances", hardly lush but certainly filled out, and the live piano/saxophone reading was as interesting as anything I've heard all summer.)

That out of the way – and to the very slight discomfort of the people from EG – the talk turned to football. Nyman is a Queen's Park Rangers fan and turns out, with obvious enthusiasm, for Sunday morning kickarounds in Hyde Park. Only, he says, "someone keeps breaking my bloody glasses".

Playing football, you wear glasses? But no, they're in a bag, makeshift goalpost. Which makes sense somehow; if I set out to break Michael Nyman's glasses, I'd make damn sure he wasn't wearing them at the time. He has a no-shit directness that commands respect (as they say) on and off the park. The conversational tactics go in firmly but fairly end more than one speculative cross – Philip Glass, Steve Reich, "Systems Music" – gets thumped equally firmly back upfield.

Nor is football entirely beside the point. Nyman's big project for the summer had been a large-scale 'environmental' piece written for and performed in a power station near Pens. All through the writing stages it had lacked a title or specific subject and Nyman's chief concern had been to find a structure that took full account of the extraordinary six-second reverberation his venue afforded. It was only as the piece neared completion that Memorial found its title and occasion. In common with half the country – and with the same shock – Nyman watched the appalling events at the Heysel Stadium before the European Cup Final between Liverpool and Juventus. Not the likeliest or most promising source of inspiration, you'd have thought, but obviously strongly felt.

Now he is looking around for somewhere suitable here for further performances of the piece. He wants to avoid concert halls and, for their associations, churches; but the piece does demand quite specific acoustic conditions. Though the violins play very fast, the chord changes were deliberately very slow to accommodate the long echo of the original site; each bar re-integrates the fading reverberation of a preceding bar. Battersea Power Station is mooted but there is an asbestos problem. Memorial was broadcast live on French radio: I ask him if he feels bitter or disenchanting that such commissions should only come from abroad. Kicked into touch; clearly this is something that rankles.

As does pigeon-holing of any inflexible sort. Though Nyman is on record as hating and abhorring the term "Systems Music", he recognises that labels are, on occasion, of some use. As a music critic through the 1970s (for *The Listener*, *Telegraph*, *Music And Musicians*, both *The Spectator* and *New Statesman*) he found some need to draw lines and parcel out adjectives.

"I actually think that the more confusion there is, the better. One day I'm doing a minimal music festival, today a real festival [what does he mean?], the next day I'm doing a gig of my own at a venue like the Mermaid. The day after that, WOMAD or whatever."

And there is, as he points out, a further dimension to his career. Not only does Nyman perform his own work, he has produced a substantial body of pieces for others. In 1984, he wrote the music for the Royal Ballet's *A Broken Set of Rules*; this year he returned to dance with *Besic Black*, premiered by the Houston Ballet. Recently, too, the Vienna Radio Orchestra has performed *A Handsome, Smooth, Sweet, Smart, Clean Stroke: Or Else Not Play at All*.

It's easy.

Just accept that

the more confusion

there is, the better.

Ask Michael Nyman

— modern composer

and QPR supporter.

That's what we

sent BRIAN

MORTON to do.

michael nyman

**how to beat
the systems music**

michael nyman



Nyman has long found inspiration and stimulus in collaborations that take him beyond a conventional concert repertoire. He quotes artist Paul Richard's distaste for the anonymity of a process by which the painter produces the canvases, the buyer signs the cheque and the finished work disappears behind the heavily insured, burglar-alarmed doors of a Hampstead or Richmond villa.

Nyman thrives on the contact of performance, neat or messy. Whatever his qualms about hearing his work played back on disc, he clearly enjoys and profits from the chance to confront audiences, and though recording is full of compromise, unfulfilled aims and hopes, there remains the sense, one denied to a painter that "if I sold 10,000 albums, there might be 5,000 good homes that had my album... and yet the music still exists. They don't own it. I can go and perform it somewhere else and it'll be different next time, better next time, you'll get it right next time".

THESE DAYS, Nyman is happy to be able to toss out his *Draughtsmen's Contract* score to anyone who wants to know what sort of stuff-do-you-do?, though he points out that, first, it can't be taken as absolutely representative, and then, that he's worked on another eight projects with film-maker Peter Greenaway.

Much of his work, and among it some of his most distinctive, has been in settings of long stretch removed from the ultra-seriousness of the new New Music. While he sounds less than galvanized when Glass or Reich come

up, he admits to a sharp pang of envy (unlikely at it may sound) at the Eurythmics' hit "There Must Be an Angel": "that's one that I would have been proud to have written". He has had his own flirtation with the outskirts of pop, working with The Flying Lizards. More recently, he's done commercial work.

"I'm serious about what I do, but I also like irony. So I like the irony of doing commercials because I'm working myself into a different context and having to please a completely different set of punters who have something very, very precise in mind. It's the most marketable thing I do and they are more critical than anyone else. I've got to package my music in the same way they've got to package everything else. I might write three, four, five hours of music a year and yet there's more coaching from outsiders going on in 28-second jingles than in the five hours of music".

The New Music crowd, he hints, wouldn't stand for that degree of control. He quotes one instance of an unexpected and fruitful collaboration, composer Harrison Birtwistle's astonishing electronic score for the Sidney Lumet/Sean Connery film *The Incident*. The point, though, seems to be that the experiment hasn't been repeated; Birtwistle either hasn't been asked again, or chooses not to.

Nyman feels that, in such commissions, "limitations, constraints are stimulating rather than the opposite". Above all, it seems, he admires the kind of professionalism which consists – however else we'd want to define it – in making the most of limitations or imposed boundaries. Another of Nyman's less expected enthusiasms is his admiration for Sting, with whom he worked on the soundtrack for the Richard Loncraine/Dennis Potter film *Brimstone and Treacle*. "There's a lot of pretentious nonsense there but he's a very impressive guy, very hard working, very good musician".

And it's via Sting, curiously, that we get round to one of my mental list of questions. Nyman – like Eurythmic Annie Lennox, he reminds us – had the strictest and most formal grounding imaginable at the Royal Academy of Music. It's a basis that, like riding a bike, can never be unlearned or completely forgotten. In his twenties, he worked as a musicologist, collecting folk musics in Rumania, and as a baroque and new music editor. His mentor for some of that period was the legendary Professor Thurston Dart, with whom he worked at King's College, London. Dart's central obsession was the nature of musical authenticity, both in composition and performance.

It is clear that Nyman's own criteria for authenticity come from a version of neo-romantic auteur theory (it's a parallel he draws himself): my music is played authentically when I play it; I can train someone else in the correct attack and emotional dynamics, but even then that version will remain at one remove from the original conception. Getting down to cases, he mentions the Police whose sound was authentic, because it emerged

clear and entire; Sting's most recent work, by contrast, is too mugged-up and self-conscious (part and parcel, maybe, of the "pretentious nonsense"). Talking again of the Bloomsbury concert and his admiration for Evan Parker:

"One could find players to do an Evan Parkerish thing but I wouldn't use them. He does what he does and that's it".

Nyman doesn't readily resort to anecdote – which comes as a refreshing change – but he does offer one telling instance. Once, with some academic problem or other that needed advice, he tracked down the curmudgeonly Dart to his house in Cambridge. "Eventually, he asked me in, sat me down and put on a record. Look, I want to play you this. These people perform Bach in the authentic manner". It was the Swingle Singers.

Much of what passes for 'authentic performance' of early music nowadays is little more than pap, Nyman believes, hopelessly amateur and at the same time excessively slick. He looks back with admiration at a group such as *Musica Reservata*: "They were rough, crude, they made mistakes, they were looked down upon by the critics and early music snobs, but they played with passion and commitment".

AS IN MUSIC, so in football, Entertainment, commitment, professionalism at Loftus Road (he's nothing if not an optimist!), on Hyde Park, Sunday mornings, relaxed enjoyment, no broken bones, the result not at issue. Music is to be enjoyed – both by performers and listeners – but professionally it is to be played with the kind of attentive care any other craft would demand.

Nyman was aware that his Bloomsbury gig was "not safe, a dangerous concert to do", positively because it pushed him out into relatively uncharted water, less so because it ran counter to the (presumed) expectations of the Nyman fans who came listening for *The Draughtsmen's Contract*. Above all, he fears the kind of ossification into a neatly labelled 'style' that he sees in the big New Music names and that comes from too devout a homage to theoretical orthodoxy or market forces (if, in fact, they're different).

It is precisely his forward looking and electric approach (no contradiction) allies him to those pre-modern composers like Haydn or Boccherini for whom music was a natural, social and civic force and the composer an artisan who fulfils wider but no less specific needs than those of his own ego. He's still looking for suitable sites for *Memoria* but he's also on record as willing to do a song for QPR (and you can bet it'd be better than the usual *Here we go, here we go, here we go* stuff). Music, for Michael Nyman, exists only out in the world and it may be the most frustrating aspect of his career that his temperament requires the world to come to him – not because he feels owed a living but because he won't wallpaper it with subjective scores.

"I'd like to do more. I'd like to be forced to do more. ●"

a ducal deja vu

AS IF to echo that oft-quoted thought of Beecham, Duke Ellington once remarked that it was no crime to steal, as long as you stole from yourself. And that is something Ellington did with remarkable frequency throughout his musical life. Certainly, Ellington—like many other jazz composers—used the basis of others' tunes to create his own. The 1926 "Tiger Rag," while "In A Mellophone" (1940) uses the chord sequences of "Rose Room". Certainly, Ellington's work was also plagiarized—witness the 1946 "Happy Go Lucky Local" which emerged later as "Night Train", a hit for several artists in later years. But it is the manner in which Ellington recycled portions of his own work that is the main point of interest here.

Ellington's most ambitious work could be said to be "Black Brown and Beige", otherwise known as "A Tone Parallel To The American Negro". Opinions on the genesis of this work vary, as an article in the English periodical of the 1930s *The Composer*, by Ellington, would suggest that he had the idea of this piece sketched out some years before it was actually performed in 1943. In fact, work on writing "Black Brown and Beige" began only a month before it was due to be premiered in January 1943, but the harsh critical reception it received led to Ellington playing the original version in full only once more and recording only excerpts. A later revamped version featuring Mahalia Jackson omitted many of the original themes. And yet, fragments survived, particularly "Come Sunday" which became a concert feature for Johnny Hodges. Twenty-two years later, Ellington was engaged in writing his first "Concert Of Sacred Music", and one of the recurring themes was "David Danced Before The Lord With All His Might". This was a feature for both the vocal part by Esther Marrow, and as a vehicle for the flying feet of tap dancer Bunny Briggs. Yet the theme was none other than "Come Sunday", with just the tempo changed—for Briggs, it was doubled.

Of that fabled '30s concept that was the basis of "Black Brown and Beige", it was given the working title of "Boola" and had five parts. Although "Boola" never saw the light of day, again Ellington did not forget, and one of his classic works of the 1940s "Ko Ko", formed a part of one of the sections of "Boola".

IN 1939, Billy Strayhorn had become part of the Ellington inner circle, and his almost telepathic contact with Ellington's musical method soon had many unable to distinguish what had written what. It is still widely thought by many that Ellington wrote his theme "Take The A Train", when in fact Strayhorn was the author. But this too was material for the Ellington recycler—in 1948, it formed part of a mini-suite which extended the theme into a multi-tempoed work called "Manhattan Murals", and of course in the '50s it was again revamped with a bopish vocal by Betty

Roche and a long tenor solo by Paul Gonsalves. This version stayed in the band book for some years until the early '60s, when the original version was more or less restored, but with a waltz-time piano introduction before the main theme.

Another Ellington-Strayhorn collaboration was "The Eighth Veil", which first appeared on a transcription recording in March 1946; but apart from several public performances, it was not recorded until 1951. Yet Ellington had not forgotten. At a Carnegie Hall concert in November 1948, there appeared a two-part suite "Symphoniac", the first movement of which had Ellington quoting from "The Eighth Veil". "Symphoniac" was performed again—apparently for the last time—a month later at a Cornell University concert, with the same "Eighth Veil" quote.

After the 1951 recording, "Eighth Veil" stayed in the band's repertoire for the decade, until in 1962 it formed a movement in Ellington's "Atro-Bossa Suite". As if to prove that it had struck a permanent place in the Ducal memory, it reappeared on several concert performances of the '60s. Yet the original "Symphoniac" has further significance, for immediately after quoting from the "Eighth Veil", Ellington breaks into a reflective six-note theme, which serves as a bridge to the next part of the composition. That, it seemed, was that, but a decade later, at the Newport Jazz Festival, Ellington played an extended composition he had written to celebrate the visit of Princess Margaret to Canada that year. And the main theme? None other than that fragment of piano from "Symphoniac". A demonstration of the remarkable retentive qualities of Ellington's memory, which was shown again when a portion from a long piano improvisation at the Museum of Modern Art solo concert in 1964 formed the major part of "Ad Lib On Nippon" one of the 1967 movements in the "Far East Suite". Even the most unlikely pieces remained in Ellington's memory—in the 1965 "Acht O'Clock Rock" reappeared three years later in the intriguing "Atro-Eurasian Eclipse".

Ellington also returned to his earlier compositions, refining them or extending them. Whether the process was successful when in 1950 Ellington recorded three titles originally recorded as three-minute records—"Mood Indigo" (1931), "Sophisticated Lady" (1933) and "Solitude" (1934)—at much greater length is a matter of taste and opinion, but Ellington was not alone in this. Charles Mingus was just one who constantly returned to past themes, often to great effect, and in 1978 to mark the death of his long-time friend, painter Farwell Taylor, he revived the 1958 "Far Wells, Mill Valley" as "Farewell Farwell".

But only Ellington constantly came up with fragments from ten, or even twenty, years ago to form a completely new work, unrelated to the source. Doubtless, other examples could be found, but in the space we have, let this suffice—perhaps it will drive listeners back to their Ellington collections to hunt the original. ●



CHRIS HACKETT

GREG MURPHY
explains how
Duke Ellington
never forgot a
good idea.



Bob Brookmeyer



Teddy Wilson

SOUND CHECK

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
Plays W.C. Handy/St. Louis Blues
(CBS 21128)
Ambassador Satch
(CBS 21121)

BOB BROOKMEYER
And Friends
(CBS 21123)

BIG BILL BROONZY
Big Bill's Blues
(CBS 21122)

DUKE ELLINGTON
Black Beauty
(CBS 21130)

EDDIE CONDON AND HIS DIXIELAND BAND
At The Jazz Band Ball
(CBS 21129)

BENNY GOODMAN
Swing With Benny Goodman
(CBS 21124)

MAHALIA JACKSON
Newport 1958
(CBS 21131)

JIMMY RUSHING
Little Jimmy Rushing & The Big Brass
(CBS 21132)

TEDDY WILSON
Mr Wilson & Mr Gershwin
(CBS 21125)

THE IDEA of the budget reissue is usually more appetizing than the event. Companies habitually mess with sleeves, sound, running order—as if it was any old snatch out of the archives. Or they dress up low-grade sessions with gold seal titles and blue riband packaging. Such, you might think, is CBS's / Love Jazz series. It's a hotchpotch, for sure, but the ten latest releases (all at a few coppers over three pounds) are surprisingly high on interest. Somebody over there is starting to like us. Here are a hundred words or so on each of the ten.

There are probably three or four dozen Duke Ellington LPs you should have ahead of *Black Beauty*, but this is still an intermittently luxurious small-group date from 1960. Some of the tunes were silvered with age even then, like the ancient "Black Beauty" itself; less familiar are "Dual Highway," "Something To Live For," a simple "Blues." Sometimes there's that odd whisper of Duke

savaging his legacy: in Lawrence Brown's plodding "All Too Soon" feature, the pianist stabs madly at the keys. Gentle giant Harry Carney is the grivoid anchor, Johnny Hodges the slowly curling mist.

Just as dapper, just as calmly impenous is Teddy Wilson on his trio date (purportedly live in 1959, although the applause sounds doctored in). Despite some intrusions by Al Lucas and Bert Dale, this is absorbingly intense jazz piano. Because he exudes pathos and resentment, Wilson might sound like a skater on this Gershwin book's surface; actually, he rewrites it to hard, undecorative ends. Having "Embraceable You" and "But Not For Me" played in this exacting way makes one cavil at the bluster of other improvisers. He knows just when to stop a trill, how to balance a run, what shade to put on a phrase—when to stop end start, if you like. Mainstream too subtle for wide acclaim—this is the pick of the set.

Some singers, I pass, mostly on Mahalia Jackson at Newport. The great, ripe, vast voice studies itself for 12 sacred songs with minimal accompaniment from keyboard and guitar. Against the mutter of the crowd, she sometimes hushes her own wildness: "My God is Real" sounds as if she is alone in church. Beside the holy rutilant thunder of much gospel, this is a formal, stately recital.

The polter side of Jimmy Rushing comes out on *And The Big Brass*. Despite an aggregation of stars and old colleagues, the arrangements are too smoothly presentable to permit Basie's old wide boy much leeway to sing. Not that anyone could do much with material like "Knock Me A Kiss." Only, inevitably, on the blues—a savoured "Harvard Blues" and a mighty "Jimmy's Blues", sneeringly abetted by Dickie Wells—does Rushing open all the windows. Try and find his record of "Save It Pretty Mama" with Budd Johnson—that should smoke the house.

What's *Big Bill Broonzy* doing in this pile? Durno, but it's a useful primer of Bill's 1936-41 sides. He had a loser's voice—a fatalistic, even, with the blues welcomed like a humorous bad penny—that the dry sting of his guitar style suited because he heard so melodically. The accompaniments mix together other guitars, piano, trumpet and washboard (played by his brother-in-law Sam). A dance tune like "New Shake 'Em On Down" sits beside the surreal "Just A Dream" and the vicious "Medicine Man Blues"; by "Night Watchman Blues" his backing is starting to sound arcane. It is 1941. But Broonzy's voice hoots at the moon, purer than ever.

Singing takes the most significant honours on the two Louis Armstrong LPs. By the '50s, caught in the kind of showbiz rep exemplified by a title like *Ambassador Satch*,

Armstrong had lost any worthwhile context for his own playing. Sometimes he musters a blues chorus of nobility, but most of his sound is fashioned in high, hollow gestures. He was already tired. The *Ambassador* set, from a 1955 tour, reminds mostly of what an awful group the All Stars were. Then Louis sings "All Of Me", and the music gets on its feet and Edmond Hall and Trummy Young play respectable solos before Armstrong leads a great ride-out.

The Handy collection, from 1952, is much better—one of his best later records. Armstrong plays and sings tunes which matured at the same time as he did, end it's an intriguing check on a man's roots. Nobody could top Besie Smith's monumental "Yellow Dog Blues", but Louis' reading is delicious; and the lyrics of "Beale Street" and "Hesitating Blues" are transformed into the back alley poetry that W.C.H. strained so hard to deny. Armstrong's trumpet never again sounded so assured as here.

Dixieland, of course, had by then superseded "classic" jazz as the prime vehicle for misplaced nostalgia (though swing wasn't far behind—witness the *Benny Goodman* set. These 1951 re-recordings of Fletcher Henderson arrangements are pointless beside the original '30s prototypes—the king of swing preparing for commerce of exile.) But *At The Jazz Band Ball* is something a bit different. This is a straight reissue of *Bixieland*, a Chicagoan set with a motive: all the tunes were associated with Bix Beiderbecke, and the major cornet soloist is Bobby Hackett—once considered as Bix's likeliest successor. Although the lyric beauty of Hackett's solos on "Singin' The Blues" and "I'm Coming Virginia" is of a completely different order to Beiderbecke's, these strong but wistful tributes have their own kind of poignancy. Hackett knew that the time of this music was gone—he was already recording in Hollywoodish settings—and in these gentle places some old ghosts smile.

The only "modern" record in the batch is *Bob Brookmeyer's*. It's a dry martini date, despite the presence of Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter and Elvin Jones. Brookmeyer and Stan Getz converse and disengage in the succinct paragraphs of the cool method, and Gary Burton embellishes the edges. Brookmeyer's writing is cunningly faceless: some remarks blend in with the bland good cheer. Hearing the swing Getz generates in "Bracket" makes one wish he'd recorded more often with this rhythm section, while the leader's urbane vagueness is something close to inimitable. And they do a good "I've Grown Accustomed To Her Face". So of course I like it.

Richard Cook

Satchmo: trumpet, handkerchief and headscarf



EDWARD VESALA**Kullervo****(Leo Records Leo 017)****Recorded: Helsinki, 1984–1985.**

Ritva Ahonen (narration); Esko Helkkinen (t, piccolo t); Juhani Aaltonen, Pentti Päivinen (reeds); Heikki Wilka (bsn); Jari Hongisto, Markku Veijonsuo (tb, tuba); Iro Haarla (harp, p); Raoul Björkenheim (g); Antti Hytti (b); Edward Vesala (perc).

Bad Luck, Good Luck**(Leo Records Leo 015)****Recorded: Helsinki,****December 1983****Song Of The Witch Doctors;****Callban; Bad Luck, Good****Luck; Bread For Soul; Noble****Man; Arclemac; Out Of****Mascarade.****Soloists: Tomasz Stanko (t);****Juhani Aaltonen (as, ts);****Edward Vesala (perc); with****UMO, conductor Esko****Linnavalli; Heikki Haimila,****Esko Helkkinen, Olli****Högström, Markku****Johansson (t); Juhani Aalto,****Petri Juutilainen, Mircea****Stan, Tom Bildo (tb); Pentti****Lahti, Pepa Päivinen, Teemu****Salmelin, Unto Haspa-aho****(reeds); Raoul Björkenheim****(g); Iro Haarla (p, harp);****Pekka Sarmato (b); Esko****Rosnell (d).**

IN the late 1930s Jean Sibelius was voted the most popular composer of all time in an American poll. Since his death in 1957, the very scale and scope of that reputation has lain heavily on Finnish music. Edward Vesala belongs to perhaps the first generation of composers to ease out from under the inherited weight and, in the process, to find new ways of exploiting Sibelius's example and influence.

Given that, it's hardly surprising that he should have turned to the Poems of the Kalevala District, the Finnish national epic collected and transcribed in the 1830s by Elias Lönnrot. The Kalevala (as it is usually known) provided Sibelius with the inspiration for some of his best and best loved tone poems: "The Swan of Tuonela," "Tapiola" and others.

Vesala, with a commission from the Finnish Broadcasting Company, has turned to just one of the Kalevala stories, found in poems 31 to 36. Kullervo is the son of Kalevala and an unnamed woman, sole survivor of the massacre of her clan by the tyrannical Untamo. The boy grows up superhumanly strong but feeble-minded from excessive rocking in his cradle. (Remember: too much rock makes you feeble-minded.) He is scarcely fit for useful work and his days are spent plotting revenge against Untamo. Eventually, he is sold as a slave to the wife of the smith Ilmarinen, who treats him cruelly. The boy charms wolves and bears into the shape of her cattle and the wild animals tear her to pieces in her cow yard.

Loose again in the world, Kullervo discovers that his family are still alive. Only his mother acknowledges him and his mind is further unbalanced when he finds he has raped his

sister. When the rest of his family die, he wreaks a final revenge on Untamo's steadings and falls on his own sword.

Since a sizeable bulk of Vesala's Kullervo consists of text spoken by Ritva Ahonen, it's as well to know the bones of the story. No English translation (or Finnish original) is provided with the album though there is now a good Harvard paperback edition translated by Francis Magoun which is worth hunting up. The music on Kullervo is hard to assess since it inevitably does take second place to Ahonen's wonderfully lyrical and dramatic voice. My personal feeling was that the subject matter and mood of the piece would have made it ideal for the kind of solo



percussion heard from Vesala on *Bad Luck, Good Luck* on tracks like "Callban" and "Arclemac".

Good Luck, Bad Luck is (musically) more accessible and coherent. It is without question a drummer's album and only in the opening and closing tracks does the excellent UMO big band (the initials are the Finnish for New Music Orchestra) get sufficient head up to show its paces. Since a drummer is also listed, it's impossible to tell whether it is, in fact, Vesala who supplies the pounding 5/4 of "Out of Mascarade".

Tomasz Stanko and (especially) Aaltonen provide powerful, committed solos. Vesala's writing for them is equally impressive, themes they are able to develop without pointless meandering. The anthem-like title tune and, again, "Out of Mascarade" are both remarkable. "Son of the Witch Doctors" feels like an everybody-in concert opener but is none the less impressive for that.

Despite the obvious linguistic problems, Kullervo is worth a listen; it's easy enough to treat the voice as another instrument. *Bad Luck, Good Luck* grows with each hearing. My one live encounter with Vesala was in Scandinavia over six years ago. He's come some way since then. One to watch out for.

Brien Morton

OSCAR PETERSON**The George Gershwin****Songbook****(Verve 823 249 1)****Recorded: Los Angeles,****October & November 1952.****The Man I Love; Fascinat'n****Rhythm; It Ain't Necessarily****So; Somebody Loves Me;****Strike Up The Band; I've Got****A Crush On You; I Was Doin'****Alright; 'S Wonderful; Oh,****Lady Be Good; I Got****Rhythm; A Foggy Day; Love Walked In..****Oscar Peterson (p); Barney****Kessel (g); Ray Brown (b).**

OSCAR PETERSON exists at three levels, and the first two perhaps cloud and distort the third. One, he is, quite literally, a household face (not a household name, courtesy of Budweiser's beaming presence in a beer commercial; two, due to the efforts of Norman Granz, first and arguably most ponderous of jazz "producers," Peterson is revered by that section of the population who have time only for the surface and not the substance of jazz — mainly because they're too busy making enough money to pay for tickets to his concerts. These are the people who will tell you "yes, he's one of the greats, up there with Ella, Basie, Kenny Ball, Dave Brubeck..." "scuse me, Charlie who?"

The third level, Oscar Peterson, jazz pianist, is not too readily discerned outside of his relationship to his image. That may not be too surprising, for then it becomes a problem for the reviewer. If you do not like his work it is open to interpretation as sour grapes — us elitists know better than the good ol' boys at Budweiser and Verve — but if you do enjoy his work and say so you are in danger of being identified with the slick tie end expense account lobby and the purists may well begin to regard you as a class traitor or worse.

So the need remains to try and extricate Peterson from his relationship to commerce if not to Gershwin and listen quite specifically to what he is doing. This is in fact an exercise well worth undertaking and can lead to great respect for the man's ability purely as a jazz musician. The present album, fairly early in Peterson's vast output, is representative of the things I like most. There is nothing of "radical reinterpretation" and the songs are given readings which reflect both their original values and the uses to which jazz has subsequently put them — note for instance the perfectly judged tempo for "The Man I Love". Overall Peterson finds a wealth of detail within this fairly conservative framework; he is consistently decorative, yet at the same time rhythmically strong, which produces highly mobile, forward-moving music. Sometimes this momentum is casual and relaxed, as on the delicate "I've Got A Crush On You", sometimes, as on "Got Rhythm", very quick indeed. Here he gathers up all the phrases you might expect to hear but didn't realistically expect anybody to be able to fit in, and gives this old warhorse a very exhilarating gallop across the fields.

The success of this style has attracted many imitators at many levels. They tend to sound bland because they have merely gone seeking to sound like Oscar — Peterson himself has so much vitality because he went seeking to play like Tatum, found Bud Powell along the way, and understood the lessons he learned from both.

Jack Cooke

DICK GAUGHAN & KEN HYDER**Fanfare For Tomorrow****(Impetus IMP 18506)****Recorded: Cold Storage,****London — 22–23 March 1985.****Sharpeville '85; Liberation;****Fanfare For Tomorrow;****Political Prisoners; Salute**

To Pithead & Clachan; News From Nowhere.
Dick Gaughan (g); Ken Hyder (d).

JAZZ AND folk encounters are not that uncommon – Shepp and Coleman had their respective Pan-African sojourns committed to record, while more recently, British improvisers have gone for the possible affinities with traditional music, both of this land and beyond. The involvement of Steeleys Span fiddler Peter Knight in Trevor Watts' current Amalgam marked one considerable change for the better: guitarist Dick Gaughan marks another – as yet little aired.

The duo with drummer Hyder (he of the long-running Talisker) based its first (private) utterances on the words of Robbie Burns. Here, the wordless interplay demands more – and yet gives more too – hemming itself to the angry present. "Sharpeville '85" is caustically evocative – sounds flare like sudden explosions, then gather into form like a bush fire. Gaughan's brittle strumming explores minor chords; Hyder answers with agitated cymbal splashes ... getting faster ... like the sound of running feet. A wailing vocal (Siren) ... and then ... Silence ... "Fanfare For Tomorrow" and "Selukle To Pithead & Clachan" are more pageant-like affairs. Hyder's machine-gun accuracy keeps the rolls crisp on the former, while Gaughan's chorale of electric guitar effects on the latter tilts a hat in the direction of the Pibrochian pipers.

Hyder is undoubtedly the more supple of the two improvisers, moving between the patter of skins and the metallic song of resonating cymbals with ease and purpose. But virtuosity, in the end, is not what this record is about. It's more the power of empathy – of spiritual unity.

A difficult record – in the best sense!

David Ilic

THE LOVED ONE

Locate And Cement

(Metaphon M1)

Recorded: Bicester, Oxford, London.

A Dose Of Nitro-Glycerine; Isomorphism IV; Phoenix Halprins; Through The Hollow Reed ... Down The Pollen Path; The New Semaphore; Bad Archery; F.M.R.L.; A Sheet Dances The Tango; Something For The Weekend.

Produced, directed and recorded by Dryden Hawkins and Zeb Yek (with vocal by Angela Widdowson).

"LOCATE AND CEMENT", if I remember rightly, was part of the instructional rubric on the old Airtex models. Finding much of sense to say about this album is going to be about as easy as it used to be to locate – let alone cement – the "alieron strut boss head" on your scale-model Stuka. It's tempting to suggest that the lads have lent too long and herd over the glue tube.

But then I rather liked it. I got quickly tired of thinking about the titles, which are art-school perverse, knocked-down surrealism: initials like "F.M.R.L." usually camouflage a coy obscenity; "Down The Pollen Path" is nicely lyrical. There I gave up, ignored the

instructions to play really, really loud and thoroughly enjoyed myself.

I know this isn't much help. Buy it if you see it. Or, since they make the offer themselves – chapter and verse: "Please feel free to tape this record" – send me a cassette and you can try it out for nothing. Or, since they give a panic number, dial 01 286 9771, and get the lowdown from them as knows. I didn't dare.

Brian Morton

THOMAS MAPFUMO & THE BLACKS UNLIMITED

Mr Music

(Earthworks/Rough Trade ERT 1008)

Recorded: Shed Studios, Harare – 1985.

Congress; Kufa Kwangu; Tondobayana; Juanita; Maria.

Thomas Mapfumo (v); Charles Mayana (b); Sebastian Farado (d); Lucky Mupawaenda (lead g); Leonard Chiyangwa (sub lead g); Unity Ndlovu (s); Tobias Areketa (back v, perc); Lancelot Kashesha (back v, claps); Everson Chibamu (t); Temba Moncube (t).

SANKOMOTA

Sankomota

(Earthworks ELP 2007)

Recorded: Shifty Studios, Lesotho – 1985.

Madhouse; Monoana; Uhuru; Woza; Mope; Ramasela; Vukani; House On Fire; Hero.

Sankomota: Frank Moki Leepa (lead v, g, perc); Maruti Selate (b, back v, perc); Moss Nkofo (d, back v, perc); with: Sunshine Mokoena (kbds, back v); Sponky Tshabalala (perc); Rick van Heerden (as, brass arrangements); William Ramsay (ts); Eirfaan Gillan (ts); Stompie Monana (t, fghn); Warric (tb, additional perc); Lloyd Ross (additional perc, keyboards, perc).

SOUZY KASSEYA

The Phenomenal Souzy Kassey

(Earthworks ELP 2008)

Recorded: Studio Laguna, Paris – 1985.

Mr Simon; Souviens Toi Et Reviens; B.B. Sexy; Success.

Souzy Kassey (lead, 2 & 3 v, lead g, medium rhythm g, perc, drum program); Hilaire Penda (b); Manou (kbds); Christian M (t, hn); Michel G (s); Joutot (tb); Jean Papy (B.B. Sexy refrain); Uta Bella & Marie Lou & Monique Lesieur (chorus); Denis Hekimian (d programming);

Marcel De Souza & Donald Anowakon (perc).

BY RELEASING records that often haven't been first released in respective country of artist's origin, Earthworks are catching African pop at a tricky point in its flight, and the cusp of potential translation problems: so that the most they can do is throw it up, see how we field or fumble each offering as it comes. It may not therefore be anything as sold as a marketing strategy, but these three recent releases have things in common.

Mr Music is unquestionably the strongest. Mapfumo probably the most presently fascinating musician in Africa. His music was born and nurtured in Zimbabwe's bitter liberation war: since Independence it's grown to reflect the subtle complexities and confusions of a society in massive (and optimistic) transition. The guitars twang their thumb-piano lines, the horns blurt, the drums kiss along, Mapfumo's gentle grumble tumbling across the open face of the sound. The different voices speak simultaneously – not an unusual feature in music of African origin – but they don't knot or tangle so inextricably as lines do in Juju or Soukous. As if they're all, for the moment, of one mind. And that mind of admirable compassion, strength, emotional intelligence ...

Sankomota, arriving in Britain from Lesotho, exhibit some of the same marks, and in particular a total absence of stridency, an unbending reasonableness (in face of grotesque provocation) that never collapses into the honest dullness of Hugh Masekela. Onstage they're buoyed by a tension between the flowing lightness and cosmopolitan sophistication of their three-voiced vocal lines, and the street-fighting urban toughness of their funk-derived rhythms. Actually the faintly stodgy production has muted these dynamic extremes, but even with poor realization, the sense is that after the revolution, the music will get better rather than blander, product of the intensity of resistance when the pressure's let off a bit. (One most obscene effect of apartheid has been the way oppressed cultures have had to leave guards at their doors, for their own protection, so that much of Azania's most urgent music today is directed at understandably closed audiences. When it's able to speak more openly, as here, the essential gentleness is its most striking feature.)

Souzy Kassey's release is the most difficult to assess. Because it seems to be trying to dispense with those assets of soukous that are very likely becoming clichés, the easy brashness, the ecstatic drift: and washes them with a strangely introspective shadow that fails to do much more than muffle the usual frenetic one-dimensional dance-glitter. Which is a pity, because Kassey is one of Central Africa's heavyweights, with an aristocratic mein, but a striking writing talent. This sounds like bosh shot but brave try to me, as if he hasn't quite properly identified which parts of soukous it is he wants to refurbish, the famous shimmering guitars, the rumba underbeat, the limber vocal lines: he smears fat synth around a lot, and horn parts that sound like synth, but he never really captures the sparkle that even the most workaday mainstream soukous finds so effortlessly.

The novelty value's all gone, and what these records have in common to replace it is considered response to a sense of emotional complexity. But they also all capture that

strength of fragility that seems to fall in around African music, from starving desert North to war-torn South, in the midst of muscular dance-stop or the barest dry rattle of tradition, an unmistakable delicacy and timeless repose.

Mark Sinker

JOËLLE LÉANDRE

Sincerely

(Planisphere PL 1267-15)
Recorded: Colden Center for
Performing Arts, NYC, no
date.

*Pomardons-nous;
Méditation; Hein! quel je
t'entends plus;
Bassomaniaque; Sky Over
Hudson Street; Let's Get
Pomard.*
Joëlle Léandre (b, voice).

UP TILL now, the only solo bass piece I could take – apart from one or two very formal Renaissance things – was Glen Moore's "Belt of Asteroids". Up till now, Joëlle Léandre has devised an extraordinary range of sound from the instrument, from high, whispering harmonics to ferocious throaty growls and sharp percussive runs, strings slapping back against the fretboard.

Voice doesn't feature on "Pomardons-nous" (or the mirror-image closer "Let's Get Pomard") which runs through most of the armoury of effects. "Méditation" consists of long, droned bass lines under a wordless vocal that underlines the insufficiency of Léandre's vocal cords and the sheer inappropriateness of much of her singing. "Méditation" develops somewhat like araga, ethered and ethereal, with tabla-like percussive rapped out on the body of the bass.

Percussive effects make up much of the substance of "Hein!", certainly the least constrained and most dramatic thing on the album and a natural climax. I found the second half rather disappointing and on subsequent hearings tended to stick with the first three tracks. "Sky Over Hudson Street" is interesting, though, in that it features the most sustained use of pizzicato technique on the set and, coupled with the scat vocal, a nod toward jazz that isn't obvious elsewhere.

I'm not sold on the voice but the bass-playing is phenomenal and phenomenally inventive. A convert, I'll be front and centre next time she plays in London.

Brian Morton

ICHIKO HASHIMOTO, TAKASHI KAKO, MASAHIKO SATO, AKI TAKASE

Twilight Monologues
(Lunatic OOI)

Recorded: Hiroshima, June-
July 1984.

*The Night Has A Thousand
Eyes (1); Tori (2); Mizu No
Kaidan – Odoru Yoru (3);
Someday (4).*

Sato (1), Takase (2),
Hashimoto (3), Kako (4) (p).

FOUR YOUNG Japanese pianists, two men and two women, offer a solo each from a series of Hiroshima concerts last year. All four

possess the executive skill of brilliant students, but their ideas are more variable. Hashimoto mixes a hash of romantic pianism which the frequent forays into dissonance merely confuse. Kako is prettily reflective in the style of an occasional pianist like Sam Rivers, but his progressions exact no surprise. Takase is better heard on her *Perdido* set for Enja, for "Tori" emerges as a polyglot complication of a simple idea. The little dancing figure she builds on sounds like Mussorgsky's "Ballet Of The Unhatched Chicks".



Mr Sato, who has six albums of his own on Japanese Columbia, seems to be the most individual stylist. He cleverly varies his track from a wide melodic span with staccato interludes that are decisive and integrated, and there's nothing outlandish or over-smart about his choices of harmony. The weight of this piece is finely realized. As a sampler, the record suggests that Sato is the one to investigate further.

(Available from 3-34-18 Ushite-Higashi,
Hiroshima, Japan)

Richard Cook

THE BENDERS

Distance

(Hot HTLP 1015)

Recorded: Sydney, February
2-3 1985.

*Verandah; Tozan; Ice;
Monsoon; The Brunt; Spirit
of Progress; Algebra;
Propaganda; The Island.*
Chris Abrahams (p); Jason
Morphett (ts); Lloyd
Swanton (b); Andrew
Gander (d).

CHRIS ABRAHAMS

Piano

(Hot HTLP 1014)

Recorded: Sydney Opera
House, December 16 1984.
*Heavy Water; The Island;
Hyperkinesis; Distance;
Stormy Weather;
Deliquescence; C F D; In,
Upside Down.*
Chris Abrahams (p).

AUSTRALIA IS not the first place which springs to mind when jazz is mentioned, but The Benders provide the latest evidence that there is jazz life in the Antipodes. *Distance* is

actually the group's third album, but the first to be made available over here; as such, it is a confident introduction to their music, essentially a cross-fertilization of Coltrane with a non-electric Weather Report, delivered with an assured ensemble playing immediately evident on the opening cut.

"Verandah", in its spacious fusion textures and buoyant rhythmic patterns, represents one half of The Benders' characteristic style on *Distance*. "Tozan" increases the tempo, and allows Chris Abrahams the solo spotlight rather than Jason Morphett, while "Algebra" is another deftly swinging workout generating a cool, rhythmic foundation for their boppish soloing. With the rather undistinguished ballad "Ice", they constitute the lighter pole of the album's spectrum.

"Monsoon" is the first indication of a darker, denser side to their fusion, setting up a pounding rhythm track behind Morphett's brooding tenor runs that is taken up in "Spirit of Progress", where his solo gradually unfolds in a series of false climaxes over Abrahams' crashing chords. The group come closest to mainstream jazz-rock in "Propaganda", as Swanton and Gander churn out a sulphurous rhythmic thrash behind the growling, double-tracked sax.

"The Brunt" comes as a refreshing surprise in the middle of all this, a punchy slice of bebop which opens the second side. A short version of Abrahams' "The Island" provides a rather undramatic finish to the album, and is also to be found on his solo project, *Piano*, where it seems more in context. A set of improvisations for piano around a series of chord progressions or melodic fragments (self-composed with the exception of "Stormy Weather"), it demonstrates his classical training as much as his improvisational abilities. It is a relaxed, contemplative record which occasionally, as on "Heavy Water" or "Distance", threatens to shift a gear without ever quite taking off.

If neither record is a remarkable achievement, *Distance* is nonetheless a fresh, unpretentious offering from a good young group who give every indication that they have the capacity to grow and develop. The Benders are currently playing around the UK circuit, and these two albums are shortly to be supplemented by the release of both their previous records, *E and False Laughter*, from the same label. Check them out.

Pity about that name, though...

Kenny Mathieson

MARTIAL SOLAL

Martial Solal Big Band

(Gaumont Musique 753 804)

Recorded: Paris – June 15-
17 1981.

*Texte Et Pretexte; Valse À
Trio Temp; Tango; Suite.*
Tony Russo, Roger Guérin,
Eric LeLann (t); Jacques
Bolognesi, Hamid Elhachimi
(tb); Mark Stecker (tu);
Pierre Gosses, François
Jeanneau or Philippe Maté,
Jean-Pierre Debarat,
Jacques di Donato or
Francis Cournet (reeds and
woodwinds); Solal (comp,
arr, p); Christian Escoude
(g); Pierre Blanchard (vln);
Hervé Derrien (cello);
Cesarius Alvim (b); Andre

Ceccarelli (d).

MARTIAL SOLAL BIG BAND

(Cy 733 617)

Recorded: Paris – December 1983–May 1984.

Et Si C'Est Vrai;

Hommages; *Piccolo*.

Collective personnel:

Russo, Guérin, LeLann,

Bernard Marchais, Patrick

Artero (t); Bolognesi,

Belhocine, Christian

Guizlen, Glen Ferris, Denis

LeLoup (tb); Patrice

Petitdidier (fr h); Steckar,

Philippe Legris (tu); Jean-

Louis Chautemps,

Jeanneau, Debarat,

Gosse, Cournet, Pierre

Mimran, Roger Simon, Jean-

Pierre Solves, George Grenu

(reeds and woodwinds);

Solal (comp, arr, p); Frederic

Sylvestre (g); Blanchard

(vln); Philippe Nadel (cello);

Alvim (b); Ceccarelli (d).

SOLAL'S STATUS as a creative virtuoso jazz pianist is well known, yet his almost equally original output of compositions for large band, deriving from an obviously important aspect of his artistic personality, has received surprisingly little comment. A factor in this lack of recognition may be its independence of widely familiar contemporary models such as the Jones-Lewis post-Basie approach, the use of rock rhythms and electronic instruments, the Jazz Composers' Orchestra, Globe Unity, AACM methods, etc. Solal's writing owes a little to the Don Ellis big band, and perhaps to George Russell, but only in a general way. There are some parallels with pieces composed several years ago for the Polish Radio Jazz Studio ensemble by Andrzej Trzaskowski and Tomasz Stanko. These latter were said at the time by Wojciech Karolak to exemplify "a symphonic way of writing for jazz orchestra". That was meant as an adverse comment, yet could be applied to Solal, and hints at the sheer density of his orchestral writing and the speed and multiplicity of events in most of these scores.

The music is original on all levels (if to varying degrees), and this makes it hard to absorb at first. Solal's melodic language is particularly independent, but so is the often very dissonant harmony. His orchestration gives rise to many new combinations, but matters are so arranged that the few string instruments really count – Darren's cello in the "Suite", for example – and this despite the music having passages of considerable violence. A most extraordinary texture occurs towards the end of this work, just before an inspired/demented Blanchard leads the final dash for home. I cannot describe the amazing combination of sounds, but it made me wonder if Solal had been reading Virginia Holt's *Night of the Seventh Moon* and whether this was intended as an evocation of the Tower of Screaming Cats.

There are brief and oblique near-quotations from Beethoven, Gillespie and one or two others, and some use of serial techniques, as in the "Suite", which fills the first LP's second side. Despite these and other sophistications, some traditional big-band practices usefully

survive, chiefly in terms of phrasing and handling the rhythmic pulse. In fact, tempo changes are frequent, and the rhythmic pulse is often broken. The extreme variety of resource and of musical gesture are such that Solal's music is very difficult to execute – another indication of his virtuoso

temperament. These two LPs represent much devoted work by all concerned, and the best tribute to the performances is that each piece sounds completely integrated, and this applies overall to the "Suite" and to "Et Si C'Est Vrai", which is in three separate movements and fills the second LP's first side.

Besides many precisely notated sections there is also much improvisation. The latter should be emphasized because considerable time is taken up with elaborate accompaniments to long solos, by Blanchard in "Valse", for example. And there are unaccompanied solos, like Escoude's in "Texte". Both written and improvised parts of course articulate the form of each piece, and here perhaps this music is at its most original. Solal never falls back on formulae but produces a new shape each time. The "Suite" and "Et Si C'Est Vrai" are, I believe, major events in the annals of orchestral jazz, and it will be amusing to see how long it is before they achieve recognition as such. There are clear correspondences between these two works but the latter is the more advanced in language, the more discontinuous, at least in some passages.

All this music is superbly recorded, as it needs to be, and both LPs are urged on the reader. If I have a small preference for the earlier one it is because of superior presentation. Exact personnel and recording dates are given and there is an interesting sleeve note by Francis Marmade of Le Monde, whereas the Cy LP sleeve is vague and offers no comments on the music.

Max Harrison

JACK REILLY

Together (Again) for the First Time

(Revelation 35)

Recorded: New York – June 1968.

Halloween; *Waltz For Fall*;

Unichrom; *5 2 6*; *Allegretto*;

La-No-Tib Suite; *Blue-Sean-*

Green; *Floral Space*.

Reilly (p); Jack Six (b); Joe

Cocuzzo (d).

November

(Revelation 41)

Recorded: Jazz Forum, New York – April 30 1981.

With A Song In My Heart;

January; *Minor Your Own*

Amos; *November*; *Lento For*

Carol; *Kyrie*.

Reilly (p); Six (b); Ronnie

Bedford (d).

THE PROBLEM we have with an artist such as Reilly, and which he has with us, is that because he works in a basically traditional idiom it is rather easy to miss the amount of fresh invention going on in his music. Yet careful listening to a piece like "January", which shows him near his best, confirms that there is a steady flow of new ideas on all planes, melodic, harmonic, rhythmic. This trio

performance of "November" – like "January" a movement from Reilly's *Zodiac Suite* – is most advantageously heard in conjunction with the shorter unaccompanied version on his *Brimmanship LP* (Revelation 36), for it is fascinating to observe him drawing largely different conclusions from the same material. Predictably, the two performances is the more obviously jazzlike, while there are a few moments in the solo reading that lead me to wonder if he knows Bax's lovely *November Woods*.

Reilly is, in fact, one of the smallest but growing band of players equally at home in jazz and classical music. He once toured Norway giving solo classical recitals and appearing as a member of the Ben Webster Quartet. Other places in which he has performed successfully include Poland and Italy, though not, of course, the good old UK. Despite scarcely being known here, he has recorded quite extensively, and can be heard, for example, on John LaPorta's *The Most Minor* (Everest LP805037). A pupil of Hall Overton and Tristano, Reilly is also active as a lecturer and teacher, and has published *Species Blues: A Beginning Method For Jazz Piano* in three volumes.

It virtually follows from all this that he is as much a composer as a performer, and, with the obvious Rodgers and Hart exception on the second of the above LPs, all the items found here are his own. And even if, as the two "Novembers" demonstrate, they submit to very different interpretations, they are real compositions, not just tags to get the improvisation going. From this again it almost follows that Reilly is concerned with unusual formal patterns, exemplified by the 8+8+8 structure of "Halloween", the 11-bar melody of "Unichrom", etc., and these go hand-in-hand with the other discreet departures from convention which abound in this music. Its range of expression is indeed wide, going from the pastoral mood of "Floral Space" to the blues feeling of "Blue-Sean-Green", which among the above performances is the closest to jazz basics and hence perhaps the track with which to begin an exploration of Reilly's music. Notice the smoothness with which the trio shifts from one tempo to another.

Compare, also, the free improvising of "Unichrom" with the closely patterned harmonic moves (described in the sleeve note) which underlie "5 2 6" and with the bitonality of the "La-No-Tib Suite". This latter goes back to when Reilly was studying with Overton, in his three movements, and the player is required to improvise at the end of the second and in the middle of the third. Again, this reading is best heard alongside the more succinct unaccompanied version by Carol Lian, the composer's wife, on Carousell CLP1003. Other areas again are represented by "Halloween" and "Allegretto", a movement from a piano sonata of Reilly's that works equally well as jazz; one is reminded of the quirky tunefulness of Prokofiev.

"Halloween" is the blues again, and though in the sleeve note Reilly modestly says this was inspired by Bobby Timmons, it is in fact vastly superior to horrors like "This Here" and "Dat Dere", and is refreshingly devoid of the idiom's usual clichés. Throughout this music the mobile textures are full yet greatly varied, and Reilly shows a stronger concern with dynamics than do most jazz pianists. There is much excellent playing here, too, and he brings off some very difficult passages smoothly.

Max Harrison

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ZOOT SIMS

In A Sentimental Mood

(Sonet SNTF 932)

Recorded: 21 November,

1984, Stockholm.

Gone With The Wind; 'Tis

Autumn; Sweet Lorraine;

Castle Blues; In A

Sentimental Mood; Autumn

Leaves.

Sims (ts); Rune Gustafsson

(g); Red Mitchell (b).

IT WAS all about tone, I guess. Breathily, edgy, sensual even. A little of Lester and a bit of Ben.

Given even a half worthy melody, Zoot would effortlessly and warmly re-shape it, moulding a mile here, caressing a soupcon there. And such is the case with *In A Sentimental Mood*, which, recorded with some expertise in Sweden, late last year, purports to be Sims' last album.

It's an easy-to-take affair; relaxed, unpushed by any resident percussionist or sideman with a will to compete. Throughout, Gustafsson remains tasteful without provoking yawn-bouts and Mitchell is essentially rhythmic but admirably meiodic when asked to stand his solo round.

In short, they support. Provide room to move, lend breathing space. And on a session that spanned just five ballads and one chirpy blues, that was all Zoot really needed on which to hang his now sadly missed hat.

Nothing exciting then. Nothing you'd term memorable. Just an old friend saying goodbye with both a fond hug and a firm shake of the hand.

Which is as things should be.

Fred Deller

DAVID HOLLAND

QUINTET

Seeds of Time

(ECM 1292)

Recorded: Tonstudio Bauer,

Ludwigsburg, November

1984.

Uhren; Homecoming;

Perspicacity; Celebration;

World Protection Blues;

Gridlock; Walk-a-way; The

Good Doctor; Double Vision.

Davie Holland (b); Steve

Colman (ss, as); Kenny

**Wheeler (t, ct, pocket t, fl-
hn); Julian Priester (tb);**

**Marvin 'Smitty' Smith (d,
perc).**

THOUGH DETERMINEDLY modern, this album makes reference to earlier traditions within modernism. Indeed on the theme statement of "Homecoming" Holland's quintet brought into mind, really out of nowhere at all, the old John Dankworth Seven. Once arrived, such a connection begins to settle down and is hard to shift, but it only lasts until

"Celebration" starts, at which point Julian Priester hits the groove he used to get into with Max Roach's quintets in the early 1980s. Kenny Wheeler reinforces it with that remarkable ability he has now and again to sound exactly like Booker Little, and then another set of references takes over. When you turn to Side Two, "Gridlock" then begins to recall Mingus's "Scenes in the City" (complete with voices off, traffic imitations

and, yes, somebody blowing a whistle) and so it goes.

This is not to say the album has no central focus, no overriding sense of identity — it does, but the style belongs more to producer Manfred Eicher than it does to Dave Holland. When I began my sabbatical from record reviewing ECM had already begun to develop a distinctive 'house style', and ECM a decade later seems now to be the Habitat catalogue of jazz. And Habitat jazz, like the furniture or the light fittings, offers superior marketing, easy access to predictable good taste, and quality control. There are few thrills, and no disappointments; that is how it is planned, and if that is what you want it is easily and freely available. If, however, you want your emotions torn, or even engaged, or if you want to be inspired, you generally have to go elsewhere, and run the risks inherent in such pursuits — of long waits and frequent disappointments.

Jack Cooke

SONNY ROLLINS

Way Out West

(Boplicity/Contemporary

COP006)

Recorded: Los Angeles —

March 7 1957.

I'm An Old Cowhand;

Solitude; Come Gone;

Wagon Wheels; There Is No

Greater Love; Way Out

West.

Rollins (ts); Ray Brown (b);

Shelly Manne (d).

IT IS worth recalling that, together with the 1956 Saxophone Colossus, it was this LP, a result of his first trip west, as a member of the Max Roach-Clifford Brown Quintet, that established Rollins as a major figure with the jazz public at large. The sparseness of texture is positive: all essentials are honed away, and the individuality of each participant is almost starkly apparent. When it was new, much was made of this music's supposed anger — an odd reaction in view of the ballads' tenderness. What we hear now, I think, is a variety of resource — most obviously with regard to tone — that had no precedent in saxophone playing, and a considerable vein of sardonic humour, even parody, these latter being manifest in distortions of the music's syntax.

This LP might better have been titled *What I Learnt from Monk*, and it can instructively be heard in parallel with the various recordings he made with Monk. Notable in all these Los Angeles performances is Rollins's ability to get inside a theme, to see the further implications of the relationships discovered, and, rather than merely decorate, to build genuinely organic variations that amount to a convincing large structure. "Wagon Wheels" is a fine example of the melody being used along with the chords, instead of being thrown away after the first chorus. By the way, this piece and "I'm An Old Cowhand" were not included simply to justify the title gimmick. Rollins was always digging out the most unlikely tunes — the Prestige "Sonny Boy", for instance — and turning them into something quite different.

Weely, Manne stays within his own style, making no attempt at emulating polyrhythmic drummers such as Art Blakey or Philly Joe Jones with whom Rollins had recorded hitherto. Instead, he maintains a flawless pulse, with discreet accents; and he and

Brown take some interesting solos. The labels are reversed on my copy, but that does not stop this being a landmark of the early post-Parker years and a record that nobody should be without.

Max Harrison

OREGON

Crossing

(ECM 1291)

Recorded: Tonstudio Bauer,

Ludwigsburg, 1984.

Queen of Sydney; Pepe

Linque; Alpenbridge; Travel

by Day; Kronach Waltz; The

Gilde; Amaryllis; Looking-

Glass Man; Crossing.

Ralph Towner (g, p, ct,

synth, perc); Paul

**McCandless (oboe, ss, bs-
ct); Glen Moore (b, flt);**

Colin Walcott (sitar, tabla,

perc).

LISTENING TO Crossing, it's hard to avoid the shadow of Colin Walcott's death.

Oregon's tabla player and sitarist was killed on tour in East Germany last November, along with the band's long-time friend and assistant Jo Hårin.

To say that Walcott is irreplaceable is only to underline how remarkably cohesive and democratic the Oregon sound has always been. "Organic" may still come through with an undertone of sandaled eccentricity and while it remains true that Oregon's music always seemed a direct product of the players' personalities, the dominant presence was always that of the group itself. Oregon functioned as a unit.

If past tenses creep in unasked, then in part Walcott's death is to blame. More serious, though, and more to the present point, is the suspicion that Crossing represents a sorry dilution of the band's best work. There is little variation of mood or pace and one title rather too easily merges into another. Some of the tunes, noticeably Paul McCandless's opener "Queen of Sydney" and Glen Moore's characteristically wry "Kronach Waltz", fell to get much beyond their own initial ideas.

The appearance of a Prophet 5 synthesiser in a determinedly acoustic band suggests one shift of emphasis. Without doubt, Crossing is Oregon's most rhythmic, least consciously textural album since the unexpected and patchy Together collaboration with (of all people) Elvin Jones. Not the best of their outings by any means, it did waken the band to the limitations of prettiness, however appealing, and to the possibility of a harder edged rhythmic base than is possible on the subtle and subtly tuned tabla.

The key to Oregon has always been instrumentation. At one time or another, all four players have recorded wind instruments (in addition to the horns here, Towner plays French horn and Walcott clarinet), both Moore and Towner double on piano. An interesting addition to McCandless's armory on Together was the bass clarinet with its throaty, belching and inherently rhythmic feel. On Crossing, it is his soprano sax that adds the most striking new component, a far stronger, jazzier sound than is possible on oboe or cor anglais. Perhaps most significant is the retreat into the background of Towner's guitar harmonics and arpeggios; on no less than five tracks here he plays no guitar at all. On two, he plays cornet.

There is still much of interest on the album but the writing seems unequal to what looks like a reorientation (reorientation isn't a word) back from Eastern-influenced ideas and modes and towards more recognisably American styles: "Pépé Lique" has a hint of mardis gras or cajun and isn't a million miles off Weather Report à la Sweetnighter or Mysterious Traveller. Only the string trio "Travel by Day" and "Amariyllis" (pace the synthesiser) are unequivocally the old Oregon.

It would be profoundly insulting to expect such gifted musicians not to change, but there is a sense that Oregon had worked their way into a position where they were unable to match their new performative resources with not just new but appropriate and workable ideas. Perhaps further collaborations would have been desirable. But it seems desperately sad that Walcott's death should have forced the issue. His legacy, with Oregon and Codona, is an impressive one, much undervalued, and in no way compromised by this less than successful album. It's to be hoped that his friends find the will and courage to pick up where they were forced to leave off.

Brian Morton

ARNETT COBB

Keep On Pushin'

Recorded: New York, June 27, 1984.

(BeeHive BH 7017)

Cheatin' On Me; Blues for Lisette; Indiana; Keep On Pushin'; Stardust; Deep River.

Arnett Cobb (ts); Junior Mance (p); George Duvivier (b); Panama Francis (d); plus on *Indiana* and *Pushin'*: Joe Newman (t); Al Grey (tb).

COBB is one of a long line of tenor funksters that stretches at least as far back as Herschel Evans (in the original Base band) and includes younger players like Morrissey, Weller and Gail Thompson. The sleeve-note underlines the joyous impact of his playing around the end of World War Two. But it's not a good sign if the reviewer's first thought is to review the sleeve-note rather than the record, and this particular album is a mixed blessing.

Blame the programming in part, but some of the quartet tracks are a bit lacklustre (to be more precise, Cobb plays a bit flat, which could have been easily corrected) and the recording of the rhythm section sounds, to my ears, too dead for this type of band. The more varied Side Two makes a better impression played first, with relaxation seeping through the long title-track (which perhaps started out even longer, judging by a bad edit at the head). And "Stardust" allows Cobb to edge close to the unsavory side of Ben Webster, showing the strong links between jazz balladry and R-and-B bewdery.

The short "Deep River", a duet between Cobb and the late George Duvivier, makes for a soulful ending to an album that's at least satisfactory, but should have been more satisfying.

Brian Priestley

MIKE ABENE

You Must Have Been A

Beautiful Baby

(Stash ST 249)

Recorded: New York, December 1984.

You Must Have Been A Beautiful Baby; T.U.A.S., Passion Flower; When The Nylons Bloom Again; Played Twice; When Love Comes; Upper Manhattan Medical Group; Hullo Bolinas; Ba-Lue Bolivar Ba-Lues-Are. Mike Abene (solo p).

WHEN SOLO piano albums were a novelty 15 years ago, all you needed to get a response was a lot of technique and a conviction that what you had to say was 'important', which is what Keith Jarrett had (the conviction, that is, not the importance). The present album, if not the greatest thing since sliced bread, is at least moderately nourishing and vindicates the exposure given to a fairly obscure performer.

Abene's work in the '60s with Maynard Ferguson left an impression of anonymous competence that was no kind of preparation for the wide-ranging ability shown here. The material ranges widely too, from Fats Waller to Steve Swallow, with two relatively unacknowledged Billy Strayhorn tunes and two of Monk's that are hardly ever loved ("Played Twice" and "Ba-Lue"). And, in fact, there is quite a lot of Monk in Abene's approach, especially rhythmically, plus influences from both earlier (stride) and later (Tyner?) – but, thankfully, no Jarrett.

It all comes together in the up-tempo original "T.U.A.S.", where the extremely oblique relationship of the theme to the "Georgia Brown" chords is successfully maintained in the improvisation – which is no mean feat. At times rather too jokey, just like Chick Corea pretending to play Monk, Abene is at the least enjoyable and occasionally more than that.

Brian Priestley



DAVID DEFRIES

The Secret City

(MMC 009)

Recorded: London, 1985.

The Secret City; Reflections On The Great Invocation; Naked's Dreamsong; Le Marche A La Marche Des Peches; Bubbles; The Charge Of The Water Brigade.

Defries (t, synth, perc, v); Barry Beckett (t); Dal Pritchard (bs cit); Paul Nieman (tb); Mark Wood (g); Ernest Motile (b, perc); Chucho Merchan (el b), Nan Tsiboe (f, perc); Mamdi Kamara, Joao Bosca, Roberto Pla (perc, v); Maggie Nicols (v). (Collective personnel).

THIS IS an ambitious LP, although its areas of play are deliberately sparse, sometimes denuded of excess activity. It's picture music – evocations of sun-baked plains, sweltering forests, the 'secret city' of the cover photograph. Defries has constructed a programme full of tiny incidents, endless pittering between points – it's often fascinating and frequently diffuse, too scattered to find a key to.

His own trumpet is a sniping, skittering sound; he overdubs it into an eloquent battery of horns on the title track, supported by a snickering undergrowth of percussion and the earth voice of Ernest Motile's bass. The "Reflections" which follow send us on a trail to China. Instrumentation drifts from track to track. There's an impression of a shadow theatre of players, each moving up to say their lines and bow out again.

The most exciting music is in "Le Marche", where Defries and Barry Beckett call to each other like competing songbirds and a tapestry of voices and percussion creates the most joyful altissimo dance. But, at 12 minutes, it is four minutes too long. "Water Brigade", a bit of a joke, is also overcooked. Yet this is all so beautifully recorded, every pitch ringing like chandelier glass, and Defries knows his sources and musicians so well, that even as a series of exotic episodes *The Secret City* is an enchanted package.

Richard Cook

THE NEW YORK CITY ARTISTS' COLLECTIVE

Plays Butch Morris (NYCAC Records 503)

Recorded: NYC, 19 November 1982.

Beyond; Music For the Love Of It; Alexandre At 2; The Current And The Feather. Butch Morris (conductor, p); Rita Wood (el b on 2 and 4); Juan Quiñones (g, hmca); Issac Falu (el b on 1, 2 & 4); Steve Buchanan (as); Tom Bruno (d); Ellen Christi (v); Lefferts Brown (synth).

THIS IS a curious album and I'd love to be able to provide a sensible category for it. Morris is best known as a comet player (he provides acoustic piano here) and arranger and hasn't this far distinguished himself as a composer.

There's obviously a hefty element of irony about the proceedings. The "plays..." title is usually reserved for slightly tacky tribute albums to the likes of Mercer or Rodgers or Gershwin. The cover photo (outside the Hotel Chelsea) looks like a shot for *Weekend At Amy & Navy* and there's a little thank you to Romeo at Girl Loves Boy for Mr Bruno's hair style. Someone is winding us up.

Poet Roger Riggins' incoherent liner note emphasizes the "postmodernist" slant of the band. Certainly there is a good deal of deconstructing going on of rhythm, melody and of Ellen Christi's vocal line which (most notably on "Alexandre at 2") begins in the vicinity of Sheila Jordan and ends far west of anyone I've ever heard. I toyed with an "avant-garde swing" but only if you promise not to complain to Richard Cook.

Instrumentally, the sound is very heavy on the guitar (occasionally very, very heavy) and synthesizer. Quifones doubles on blaring mouth harp for the opening track and shows how effective the despised mothe can be in a jazz setting. The saxophone scarcely gets an audible look in; piano, bass and drums do their work uncontrovertably, though Morns likes to chuck in the odd discord. Curious Erik Satie-like tunes emerge briefly out of the background and then disappear.

Odd as it undoubtedly is, the overall effect is seductive and highly appealing. Jazz sorely lacks much in the way of irony and could do with more. Is it just mean and picky then to complain that 15 minutes a side is a bit thin for the money?

Brian Morton

PETER SPRAGUE

Na Pali Coast
(Concord CJ-277)
Recorded: Mad Hatter
Studios, LA, February 1985.
Japanese Waltz; Magic Mizz
Melissa; Children's Song No
6; Na Pali Coast; I Could
Write A Book; If I Should
Lose You; I Didn't Know
About You; Coltrane.
Peter Sprague (g); Steve
Kujala (fl); Bob Magnusson
(b); Peter Erskine (d); Tripp
Sprague (ts on "Coltrane").

THE COVER of American guitarist Peter Sprague's new album shows a jagged and serrated range of rocky seacoast ridges, shrouded in misty vapour and lapped by a foaming sea. There is something fierce, even barbaric, contained in the image; as a lead in to the music it holds, it could scarcely be less appropriate.

With the exception of the final cut, "Coltrane", which manages to build up a passable head of steam and features a welcome harmonic variation in the introduction of Sprague's brother on tenor, the album rarely rises far beyond the level of high class muzak, the kind of thing fated to be appropriated for television documentaries about picturesque places.

The musicianship is not in question, whether Sprague's guitar (acoustic on side one, lightly amplified on two) or former Corea sideman Kujala's vibrant flute. Both play with a leathery, floating tone that rides smoothly above the rhythm section but rarely holds the attention. The second side is marginally more compelling than this first; that may in part be down to the more substantial nature of the songs.

"Japanese Waltz" and "Children's Song" are two of Corea's slighter pieces, while "Magic Mizz Melissa" is a rather uneasy blend of classical and cocktail lounge, featuring a bowed instrument which, in the absence of any other credit, I assume must be Sprague's

guitar. The Rodgers-Hart and Ellington standards on the second side provide a little more for the players to get their teeth into—genius, of course.

Advocates will doubtless argue for the restrained rhythmic and melodic subtlety of this music, but to these ears it is all insufferably dull, although that may be more my problem than Peter Sprague's.

Kenny Mathieson



ANTHONY WILLIAMS

Spring
(Blue Note BST 814216)
Recorded: 12 August 1965.
Extras; Echo; From Before;
Love Song; Tee.
Sam Rivers, Wayne Shorter
(ts); Herbie Hancock (p);
Gary Peacock (b); Williams
(g).

THIS IS the most difficult of these 20 Blue Notes. The music drifts between bases and traditions and is hung up on some disturbing tensions. Points of form and order are sent into flux by the leader's material (all the compositions are by Williams). Hancock lays out in "Extras", and over agitated brushes there are two long tenor statements. "Echo" is five minutes of drum technique. "From Before" opens on a slow saxophone trill, moves through free melodic contrapuntalism into a darkening orbit that finishes on a lovely piano coda. "Tee" opens out a modal envelope until the music seems completely unfiltered; then it just stops. Only "Love Song" is at all conventional.

Oblique virtuosity calls the shots. Rivers is more hubristically "modern" than Shorter, with harmonics and tone strangulations that peel a further layer off Coltrane, but Wayne is even more inscrutable — his solo on "Extras" is resolutely without logic. Perhaps the most interesting thing is the rare partnership of Peacock (under-recorded) and Williams: their rhythms allow no settlement, and the record pulses to this complex, jagged, crashing beat.

Richard Cook

DENIS LEVAILLANT

Direct
(Nato 140)
Recorded: Cinque St
Francols d'Assise, Bruz,
France October 26, 27 1983.
Un jour, sur les conseils de
Paul . . . Comme un Duc;
Lennie Up; Thelonius

Melodius; Earl's Pearls; Hii
Samson!; Les Deux Noms
de Bud; La Dernière Prise;
Le rendez-vous (New York
City, St Mark's Place); le
jeune Franz avec le vieux
Cecil); Le lendemain:- Paul
n'avait laissé aucune
instruction pour refermer la
boîte.
Denis Levaillant (piano).

DIRECTIS a series of hommages to eminent jazz pianists, drawn loosely into a suite. There is little obvious or intrusive attempt to impersonate each figure literally — Powell, Ellington, Trestano — no quotes or tags, no passages "in the style of . . .", but rather an effort at catching an underlying spirit.

Levaillant brings a quirky humour to all his work and there is more than enough leeway for readings and rereadings of his enigmatic track titles, none of which suggests a literal match with the ironic, almost sarcastic playing. Like the group set Barium Circus, also on Nato, recommended sans explanation. To understand Levaillant, you think with your ears.

Brian Morton

DEXTER GORDON

At Montreux With Junior
Mance
(Prestige P-7861)
Recorded: Live at the
Montreux Jazz Festival, July
1970.
Fried Bananas;
Sophisticated Lady;
Rhythm-A-Ning; Body And
Soul; Blue Monk.
Dexter Gordon (ts); Junior
Mance (p); Martin Rivera (b);
Oliver Jackson (d).

BIG OL' Dexter. It's so easy to ride the myth with this giant celebrant of the art of steaming. His tone infrangible as time-hardened wood, phrased like mountains, a Dexter Gordon solo can be a romantic diversion into the world of bed-time stories. But, inseparable from the narrative images, a hard, unsentimental musicality scorches out a different pattern.

I always think that Gordon makes an interesting comparison with Tenor-Of-The-Year Rollins. Where Sonny dives and circles around ideas, making narrative-time elastic, this man forces that same time to stand still. When Gordon blows it sounds as if there is only one possible thing to say, one way of saying it; Rollins debates the endless possibilities.

The "Body And Soul" into which Dexter delves here is a perfect example of that. There is nothing elaborate about this performance. Affirmative in mood, he hits each note with the force of a jack-hammer as if trying to peg the emotion in its stride. This is the source of his optimism; an arresting decisiveness, a refusal to be deflected from his purpose.

Usually best served by a more vigorous rhythm-section than this, there are times when he sounds over-compensatory. "Fried Bananas" is fine, its loopy melody working well with Jackson's clackety-click clack cymbal, but on the first of the two Monk tunes, "Rhythm-A-Ning", the tenor gets a little too force majeure, leaving the others a touch desperate in its wake.

Nevertheless, this is music of titanic strength, both on the surface and inside. If Prestige can continue to quarry material of this quality I will be well happy.

Nick Coleman

LOL COXHILL & DANIEL DESHAYS

10:02

(Nato 439)

Recorded: Marly-Le-Roi, France, 25/26 March 1985. On *Golden Flaque; Fromage A Varese (Inc. Regardez Edgar); Solitudinette; Ceux Qu'ils Aiment (Inc. Keep It On The Island); Cleito (Inc. Tap Dancing); Un Homme Au Platond (Inc. Practice Makes); Amies Amicales; Choral A Tchang; Sergeant De Ville Très Occupé; Tea For Two (Inc. Fortitude). Lol Coxhill (saxes, v), Daniel Deshays (sound treatments).*

ON ONE level this is an examination of the possibilities presented by combining two separate and distinct elements: Coxhill's saxophone work and Deshays' tapes/electronics. The two are butted together, overlaid and allowed to accommodate each other, or simply to co-exist (recontextualising each other by so doing). Nevertheless they result in a fascinating jigsaw of facets of their work both individually and in duo.

Coxhill, of course, should need no introduction in these pages. He is a readily recognisable voice in the fabric of British jazz and improvised music, and he is no stranger to either the idiosyncratic setting or tape work. Daniel Deshays is not so well known. He has handled sound for IRCAM and French radio, as well as for a number of previous Nato releases. He creates 'sound-plays' – or 'narratives' – from the use of taped sound, occasionally treated, without speech or text. It is principally this aspect that he brings to this, his debut on vinyl.

Deshays's two solo tracks – "Amies Amicales" and "Sergeant De Ville Très Occupé" – indicate the collage/concrete areas he's working in, providing vivid soundtracks to hidden narratives. In the former unvoiced women's utterances are punctuated and eventually curtailed by the hiss of electronics; in the latter he conjures a claustrophobic atmosphere and mood.

Coxhill's solo features emphasise his attributes. "Solitudinette" is wriggling, eventful, melodically sinuous and unexpected soprano work. "Choral A Tchang" multi-tracks his playing to build a thick, shimmering choir of saxophone voices – and one of the highlights of the album, incidentally.

The remaining material mostly pitches the two musicians together in a series of duets in which the musical balance shifts between the two. In "Fromage A Varese" and "Cleito" Coxhill squeezes slixers of saxophone between Deshays' contribution – in the first invoking a curiously disembodied feel, in the other eventually providing a lovely saxophone line which soars away.

The final words of the album are those of Coxhill in a commentary on his own performance based on "Tea For Two": "I should leave it like that – it'll be alright!"

suppose. Don't want to spend too much time on it really." Here – as elsewhere – the music is rich and diverse enough to reveal the truth.

Kenneth Ansell

ART BLAKEY QUINTET A Night At Birdland, Volume Two

(Blue Note BST 81522)

Recorded: Birdland – 21

February, 1954.

Woe-Dot; If I Had You;

Quicksilver; Now's The

Time; Confirmation.

Clifford Brown (t); Lou

Donaldson (as); Horace

Silver (p); Carly Russell (b);

Art Blakey (d).



CLIFFORD BROWN
blue note 8026 memorial album

CLIFFORD BROWN

Memorial Album

(Blue Note BST 81526)

Recorded: slide one – 28

August, 1953; slide two – 9

June, 1953.

Hymn Of The Orient; Easy

Living; Minor Mood;

Cherokee; Wall Bait;

Brownie Speaks; De-Dah;

Cookin'; You Go To My

Head; Carving The Rock.

Clifford Brown (t); slide one –

Gigi Gryce (as, f); Charlie

Rouse (ts); John Lewis (p);

Percy Heath (b); Art Blakey

(d); slide two – Lou

Donaldson (as); Elmo Hope

(p); Percy Heath (b); Philly

Joe Jones (d).

LIKE ITS predecessor, Volume Two of this Birdland set gives you exactly what you'd expect from a 1954 live Blakey date – a night of bustling bebop, ferocious solos, and rattling good drumming. Lou Donaldson has his ballad feature on "If I Had You", matching Brown's "Once In A While" on Volume One, but the rest of the LP roars along at a cracking pace, the horns fired by Blakey and Horace Silver's galvanising piano. Donaldson is suitably fast if a little exorbitant, Brown simply and magnificently exciting, burning up everything in sight with his gloriously articulated hard bop fervour.

You get a better idea of his versatility from the Memorial Album, two sessions recorded just ten weeks apart in the previous summer. Donaldson reappears (on slide two), as does Blakey (on slide one), impressively taking Brown through rapid-fire exchanges on "Cherokee". Brown is singing here with the

carefree confidence of youth; the upfront attack of his opening notes on "Easy Living" are as close as his basic vivacity ever came to brashness, though he quickly relaxes into a more elegant reading.

Standouts on slide two are his own "Brownie Speaks", the opening trumpet solo a brilliant stream of bitten-off phrases, and a graceful "You Go To My Head", where Donaldson's easy loquacity is complemented by Brown's disciplined fire. The other big plus on this record is the quality of the supporting cast: Gryce, Rouse and Donaldson all impress, the rhythm sections cook to a lull, and the ensembles really swing. The pianists are a bit special too: John Lewis steps out of the Q for a great binky swing of a solo on Quincy Jones' "Wall Bait", while Elmo Hope stamps his presence on slide two with some typically offbeat bop solos and two fine compositions ("De-Dah", "Carving The Rock").

It's Brown who shines though, here and everywhere he played. Nearly thirty years after his death, it's still impossible to hear that technical brilliance, that sparkling warmth, without reflecting on how much the poorer we are for his loss.

Graham Lock

BUD POWELL

Alternate Takes

(Blue Note BST 84430)

Recorded: August 8, 1949

(A); August 14, 1953 (B);

August 3, 1957 (C); May 24,

1958 (D); December 29, 1958

(E); May 23, 1953 (F).

Bouncing With Bud (2

takes); Wall; Dance Of The

Infidels (all A); Reets And I

(B); Collard Greens And

Black Eyed Peas (B); Blue

Pearl (C); John's Abbey (D);

Comin' Up (E); Like

Someone In Love (F); Our

Love Is Here To Stay (F).

(A) Fats Navarro (t); Sonny

Rollins (ts); Bud Powell (p);

Tommy Potter (b); Roy

Haynes (d).

(B) Powell; George Duvivier

(b); Art Taylor (d).

(C) Powell, Taylor, Paul

Chambers (b).

(D) Powell, Sam Jones (b);

Philly Joe Jones (d).

(E) Powell, Taylor,

Chambers.

(F) Powell, Pierre Michelot

(b); Kenny Clarke (d); Dexter

Gordon (on Our Love Only)

(ts).

THE ALBUM title is almost misleading, as other 'alternates' not originally selected have been available since the mid-1950s on *The Amazing Bud Powell Vols. 1 and 2* (see the October Wire) and have been part of the Powell canon ever since. Not only were the present album's 1949 tracks already released at that time on Fats Navarro issues, but the rest of what's here is equally worthy of a place in the 'standard edition'.

Indeed, there are reasons for preferring some of these takes over the originally released material. Bud's solos on the early tracks are, if anything, more adventurous than on the versions first issued, the only minor goofs being caused by the other players. Later Powell may be less accurate, but the previously known versions of "Blue Pearl" and

the modal Latin piece "Comin' Up" were not as tightly organised as these new discoveries. The last two tracks, recorded little more than three years before the pianist's death, are not "alternate" but additional items and "Our Love", in particular, should have found a place in Dexter's *Our Man In Jazz* album.

For listeners not brought up on Bud, this may in fact be the best sampler currently available – the aforementioned Vols. 1 and 2 are of higher quality overall, but also of daunting intensity. This selection gives you some of the early intensity plus the beauty of later Powell. It's only a pity that some faulty editing has cropped the opening few notes of several tracks – only about ten seconds overall, so of course the impact of the performances is not lessened, but it's bloody annoying and should be corrected on subsequent pressings.

Brian Priestley

PHIL WOODS

Integrity – The New Phil Woods Quintet Live (Red)

Recorded: Bologna, April 1984.

Repetition; Azure; Webb City; 222; Blue Walls; Infant Eyes; Miltch; Little Niles; Phil's Theme.

Tom Harrell (t); Woods (as); Hal Gaipier (p); Steve Gilmore (b); Bill Goodwin (d).

THIS IS modern-sounding hard bop fronted by two undoubted virtuosos. Woods has worked his art into a kind of indestructible elegance: his alto sound is assertive and full-bodied across a range that runs with grand gestures and assurance. His solo on "Blue Walls", to pick one at random from these four sides, moves through the changes with suave but ineradicable decision. There's no doubt or remorse in Phil's world, lyrical though it may be. In the offensive Harrell he has a young partner whose own methods brim with fluency and an attack that would be daring if it wasn't so absorbed of risk. Although the sniping edge to Harrell's tone sometimes darkens his horizon, it's usually clear and untroubled.

I suppose that's why this very enjoyable and often exciting set finally pales beside more troubled, more diverse musics. This is an adventurous choice of material – drawing on such different composers as Neal Hefti, Sam Rivers, Bud Powell, Randy Weston and Charlie Mariano – given treatments that are too uniform. The sombre broodings of Wayne Shorter's "Infant Eyes" elicit only a straightforward ballad reading: it's not as simple as that.

Richard Cook

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Afro-Latino – Live from the Bass Clef, London

(Bass Clef/Wave 28)

Wosá Wena (District Six), Okoti Movement (African Culture), Winnipeg My Leg (Orchestra Jazzira), Amata (Somo Somo), Batacuba (London School of Samba), Entre Rejas (Barrio Latino), Café De Paris (Cayenne), Dos Lagrimas (El Sonido de Londres).

THE BACK cover resembles an alternative Band Aid photo: a blurry group shot bathed in red and green lights, with about half of the 71 featured musicians crammed onto a tiny stage, holding an assortment of African and Latin instruments. . . . In a way this is an Aid album – in aid of the music, the musicians, and the underground they inhabit. It is also a tribute to the patronage of the GLC, for supporting this underworld for several years, for enabling musicians like these to make a living, and to hone and polish their music without the support of the major record industry which they would never have had.

Like the best samplers, this one is an invitation to delve further into a sea of music which might not be familiar. For non-Londoners, it is an ideal way of hearing those bands (which feature in megas like *The Wire*), but which don't always reach those parts of the UK other musics reach. For the musicians, it could – and should – be a valuable leg-up into a more commercial and lucrative world – which is going to be so important next year after subsidy and patronage dries up.



So what about the music? The album opens with a rousing call to Carnival, "Wosá Wena", by District Six, whose name and music commemorates the South African past of many of the band. It's a cheerful piece of jive, which builds up from handclaps and bass into a powerful ensemble dominated by the trumpet and saxes in that typical cascading style made popular by Hugh Masekela. African Culture's lurchy, stop-start rhythms of molo-jazz depict Sierra Leone, with Abdul Tee-Jay's fluid guitar in the centre and bouncing around it, horns and cymbals. The album's oddity track is Ben Mendelson's song, "Winnipeg My Leg", re-worked here by the new Orchestra Jazzira line-up. Dave Bilelli's nasal, winding clarinet solo temporarily transforms the locale from middle Africa to middle East, and the track wanders, slowly, back to more familiar Ghanaian/Zairean territory. Ending the side, Somo Somo offer some pure soukous, led by the brilliantly idiosyncratic guitar of Fan Fan, and tribute must be paid also to his saxophone crew, whose accuracy and sharpness help make "Amata" such a memorable song.

Side Two, for Latin lovers, switches from sambas to salsa with ease. There's the salsa pure and New York from El Sonido de Londres; salsa, beautifully orchestrated but slightly blanded from Cayenne, and salsa with a Colombian tinge, from Barrio Latino. So, if you ever thought it was just one variety of hot sauce, listen to this. High spots are Pete Thom's trombone solo and the unidentified

piano revere amongst Cayenne's almost too perfect rhythmically slightly dragging, song "Café De Paris".

"Dos Lagrimas", a sad tale about the tears of a small boy, features the song's co-writer Luis Avendano; and in spite of his occasional flatness, it's a voice which perfectly evokes the best of the Cuban and Puerto Rican singers; sweet and romantic.

Altogether an excellent and very timely album, marking a point in London's musical history with some fine songs.

Sue Steward

JACKIE MCLEAN

Jackie's Bag (Blue Note BST 84051)

Recorded: Englewood Cliffs – 1961.

Quadrangle; Blues Inn; Fidel; Appointment in Ghana; A Ballad For Doll; Isle Of Java.

Jackie McLean (as); side one – Donald Byrd (t); Sonny Clark (p); Paul Chambers (b); Philly Joe Jones (d); side two – Tina Brooks (ts); Blue Mitchell (t); Kenny Drew (p); Paul Chambers (b); Art Taylor (d).

NOT ONE bag but two, and indications that Jackie McLean was already looking to do away with bags altogether. The quintet side has a restless, spacey feel that seems to exaggerate personal traits: Donald Byrd becomes very garrulous. Sonny Clark very terse, while Philly Joe Jones is even more noisily splendid than usual. McLean's alto here is urgent and fretful; his slippery phrasing tries to shake itself free of bag changes but somehow stays snagged, freedom always a breath beyond.

The key can be found in A.B. Spellman's *Four Lives In The Bebop Business*: "One composition, 'Quadrangle', which Jackie had written in 1955, involved an elaborate group construction that he was afraid would be too far-out to release as he conceived it, so he superimposed some 'I Got Rhythm' changes to make it more palatable." It would be a year or two before McLean let freedom ring; here we have the uneasy clang of compromise as the music begins to reveal his dissatisfaction with – as well as love for – hard bop conventions.

Side two hits a more relaxed groove, stays on surer ground, perhaps because, as McLean explains in the sleeve notes, it was the first time he'd written for three horns. In fact, his writing is one of the side's chief strengths – the brightly swinging "Appointment in Ghana" and a plaintive "Ballad For Doll" both proving very attractive tunes. The change in personnel brings about a curious switch in roles – now it's Mitchell's trumpet which is succinct, Drew's piano fleetly eloquent – but what makes the side extra special is the presence of Tina Brooks, an unsung tenor man who recorded only a handful of times and lived and died in inexplicable obscurity. His playing here is typically passionate and inventive, and it is his tune, the mocking bustle of "Isle Of Java", on which the leader really stretches: for a moment that plangent, oozing rasp could almost be Eric Dolphy, until the angular phrasing and sour-sweet bite make it unmistakably McLean.

Graham Lock



BACK ISSUES



1. **Ran Blake:** Camden on Camera; Eric Dolphy, Steve Lacy; Herold Land; Leo Records; Wynton Marsalis; Art Pepper tribute; Max Roach; Scuffling & Bopping; Seven Steps to Jazz – Trumpet; John Stevens Part I, Women Live

8. **Cadillac Records:** Coltrane's A Love Supreme; Count Basie tribute; Ted Curson; Miles Davis concert, Festivals – Moers and Le Mans; Barry Guy; Abdullah Ibrahim (Dollar Brand); Metalanguage; Michel Petrucci; Seven Steps – Bass.

9. **Art Ensemble of Chicago:** Benny Carter; Charly R&B; Andrew Cyrille; Menu D'Angelo; Teo Macero; Meredith Monk; Paul Murphy; Oliver Nelson's The Blues and the Abstract Truth; Recording Improvised Music; Trevor Watts' More Music; Where Were You In '62?

10. **Alterations:** Armstrong's West End Blues; Amen Baraka; Black Masks, White Masks; Art Blakey, Bobelomagus; Jazz At The Phil reviews; Hugh Masekela; Thelonious Monk, Jerry Wexler

11. **AMM:** Blue Note Reborn; Eric Dolphy's Out To Lunch; Last poet Jerri Nuddin; 'Novelty' Pianists; Irene Schweizer; Seven Steps – Trombone; UK Blues Index; Wayne Shorter.

12. **Afro Jazz:** Laurie Anderson; Gone – But Not Forgotten – Vic Dickenson, Dennis Rose, Collin Walcott; Chris McGregor; Phil Minton-Roger Turner; New Year's Honours List; New York Ear & Eye – Gospel, Ma Rainey, Cecil Taylor; Max Roach's We Insist! Freedom Now Suite.

13. **Peter Brötzmann's Machine Gun;** Charlie Parker section; Salsa; Musa Suso; The Wire's Guide to Bargains

14. **Arts Council;** Henry Becket; British Summer Time Ends; Kenny Clarke tribute; Graham Collier, Free Music Overview; Hip London Scene; Incus Festival; Jazz Funding; London Venues; Evan Parker's Saeophonic Solos; Round The Regions; John Surman; Mike Westbrook; Where Guide – Manchester, Annie Whitehead

15. **Derek Bailey;** Marthe & Fontelo Bass, George Benson; Essential Coltrane, Charles Mingus – Pheasantropus Erectus; Pat Metheny, Jim Mullen; Norme Winston

16. **Anthony Braxton;** Cotton Club; Peter King; Onyeke; Essential Dolphy; Incus Festival; Zoot Sims; Gil Scott-Heron; Clifford Brown & Max Roach.

17. **Ray Charles;** John Gilmore; Herbie Nichols; Denzil Ponce; Jazz in Paris; Betty Boop; Paladin; Afro-Jazz.

18. **Sonny Rollins;** Bobby McFerrin, Jayne Cortez; Stanley Jordan; Tommy Chase; Bertrand Tavernier; Joe Farrell (great issue!)

19. **Omette Coleman;** Charlie Haden; Steve Lacy; Boyd Rice, Slim Gaillard; Movie Jazz; Peter Ind; Urban Sax

20. **Art Blakey;** Wynton & Branford Marsalis; Bobby Watson; Hank Mobley; Ganett Trio; Bix Biederbecke; Impulse & Blue Note releases

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WIN!

TWENTY CLASSIC IMPULSE REISSUES

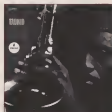
OK, CATS, it's time to put the ears on hold for a few minutes and put what goes between them into action. *The Wire* has a set of 20 - count 'em - albums in the most marvellous reissue series of Impulse jazz; and we're just itching to give them away.

All you have to do is peruse the following list of teasers, note down the answers and mail the correct solution to our penthouse premises in Cleveland Street. We'll keep them in the antique snare drum that sits on Jayne Houghton's desk, and the first correct card plucked from the heap on 30 November will find themselves the lucky recipient of the whole mellifluous set. Everything from *A Love Supreme* to *Desafinado*. We mean it.

Here goes!

1. What Impulse albums feature John Gilmore away from Sun Ra's Arkestra?
2. Whose voice tells us "mendacity makes the world go round" on what Impulse album?
3. Who are "Salt & Pepper"?
4. Which tenor saxophonist plays "Cousin Mary" on what Impulse album?
5. Who composed "Stratusphunk" on Gil Evans' Impulse classic *Out of The Cool*?

Now go to it. The Editor's decision is final in all matters pertaining to this competition. After all, he's a fair-minded man.



RECENT RELEASES

● The following have been released, or imported, since the last issue went to press. Except where a date is shown, they are believed to be recent recordings but no liability can be accepted for inaccurate information.

Listing here does not preclude a subsequent review.

JOHNNIE ALLEN *South To Louisiana* (CH145)

MICHAEL ABENE *Solo Piano* (Stash 249)

LESTER BOWIE *I Only Have Eyes For You* (ECM1298)

BOPCITY Evidence (Boplicity 12)

BOPCITY Things Are Getting Better (Boplicity 11)

TED CURSON *Live At LaSalle De L'art* (Canam 1700)

CLIFFORD JORDAN QUINTET *Two Tenor Winner* (Crisis 1101)

CAGO *Jazz Rap Vol 1* (CABL205)

BILL CONNORS *Step II* (Cream 130)

FATS DOMINO *Boogie Woogie Baby* (CHD140)

GEORGE DALTO *Urban Oasis* (Concord 275)

EARL BOSTIC *That's Earl Brother* (SPJ152)

FRANK FOSTER/FRANK WESS *Frankly Speaking* (Concord 267)

FLORA PURIM and AIRTO *Humble People* (George Wein 3007)

MARY FETTING *In Good Company* (Concord 273)

PAUL FIELDS and NOVOTNY *To James Joyce* (Rau1012)

DENNIS GONZALEZ/JOHN PURCELL *BTET Little Toot* (Designlin 13)

GRANT GREEN *Born To Be Blue* (Blue Note 84432)

BARRY HARRIS *For The Moment* (Up 2720)

FREDDIE HUBBARD *Here To Stay* (Blue Note 84435)

HAROLD LAND *In the Land of Jazz* (Boplicity CDP006)

Money (Circus Ring L100)

IPPE KATKA BAND (Leo 018)

BUDD JOHNSON and PHIL WOODS (UP 2719)

JAZZ FOR THINKERS (RAU 1013)

PETER KING QUINTET *Live At The University College Oxford* (SPJ592)

KULLERO KULLERO (Leo 017)

PETER LEITCH *Exhilaration* (UP2724)

DIDIER LOCKWOOD *Out of the Blue* (JMS037)

AFRO LATINO *Live from the Bass Clef* (Wave 28)

GASPER LAVAL *Abiosunni* (Hot Cap 1)

HANK MOBLEY *Another Workout* (Blue Note 84431)

M&M JAM SESSION (Big Bear 26)

JACK McVEA *Come Blow Your Horn* (CH147)

CHARLES MINGUS *SEXTET Live In Amsterdam* (AROC 507)

NEW YORK CITY ARTISTS COLLECTIVE *Plays Butch Morris* (NYCAC 503)

NEW YORK CITY SOUL Various (Kent 043)

OSCAR PETTIFORD *And His Birdland Band* (SPJ153)

OSCAR PETERSON *The George Gershwin Songbook* (Verve 823249-1)

PAZ *Look Inside* (Coda 18)

PEKKA POYRY *Happy Peter* (Leo 016)

JEAN PIERRE MAS *Trapeze* (JMS 036)

HILTON RUIZ *Cross Currents* (ST248)

SONNY ROLLINS *Way Out West* (Boplicity Cop006)

MAX ROACH QUARTET *Scott Free* (SN1103)

SAHARA *ELECTRIC The Dissentation And Lem Chahed* (ORB005)

CHARLIE SHAVERS *Live from Chicago* (SPJ154)

SCATTERED ORDER *A Dancing Foot ...* (Volt 1)

STANLEY TURRENTINE *2T Blues* (Blue Note 84424)

MEL TORME *Ellington/Basie Songbooks* (Verve 823248-1)

EDWARD YESALA *Bad Luck Good Luck* (Leo 015)

DAVEY WILLIAMS *Criminal Pursuits* (Trans Museq 8)

JAZZWORD

Compiled by Fred Dellar.

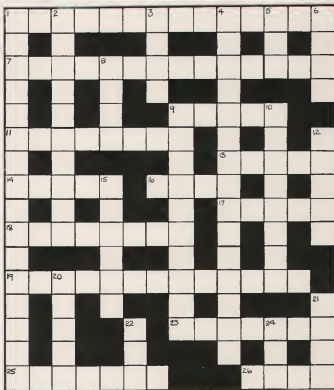
ACROSS

- 1 Trumpeter whose mother failed to place his awards in her cupboard? (7,7)
 7 Just a postal delivery for Hamp (3,4,7)
 9 Pianist — his original surname was Thornton
 11 Elephant Hunter? (5,3)
 13 Sounds like the roost for Ernie
 14 Art of keyboard capering
 16 Plant that comes with guitarist Ellis
 17 Saxs, flutes, clannets etc.
 18 Phil just couldn't sit down for his hit
 19 Cute flute tooter (5,6)
 23 Fruit peculiar to Billie
 25 and 5 down Attempt to make an avant-garde drummer out of Sheila Dan (7,3)
 26 Tans ell over for The Man

DOWN

- 1 Beat mere funk air for Bixian bandleader (7,8)
 2 He made "Fleming" fly in '51 (4,6)
 3 Fell about to hide the lady from Newport News
 4 One's Mike, the other's more Randy (7,8)
 5 See 25 across
 6 A satin toy from the Duke
 8 Bey or Kirk?
 9 One-time Basie vocalist who scored with "Million Dollar Secret" (5,5)
 10 She was big when she appeared in Jazz On A Summer's Day
 12 Recently departed Rudi of Shining Trumpets authorship
 15 Tenor Bennie
 20 Trumpets that Coltrane connected with Africa?
 21 Shaken wine for the Newport Festival producer
 22 Something to go with Rock
 24 Tan singer becomes King Cole

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH.



LAST MONTH'S ANSWERS

ACROSS: 1 Jazz Messengers; 8 (Clark) Terry; 9 Gigi Gryce; 12 (Harold) Ousley; 14 (Mode) Allison; 15 Ace; 16 Irving (Mills); 17 (Charles) Kynard; 20 Odds (Against Tomorrow); 22 Russ Freeman; 26 "Igor"; 27 Otto (Hardwicke); 28 Al Cohn; 29 (Julian) Dash

DOWN: 2 Ziggy Elman; 3 (Albert) Mangelsdorff; 4 and 12 "Slay On It"; 5 Nat (Adderley); 6 Earl (Swope); 7 "Skyliner"; 9 (John) Graas; 10 and 30 across Chu Berry; 11 Alfie; 18 (Lester) Young; 19 and 25 "Open The Door (Richard)"; 20 Ornette (Coleman); 21 and 13 Sol Yaged; 23 Sarah (Vaughan); 24 (Max) Roach.





THE WRITE PLACE

SATIE ON IT!

ONTO THE otherwise pleasing visage of your usually excellent periodical stole a completely unexpected carbuncle. I refer to a review in your September issue in which your reviewer, Brian Morton, called into question the precarious place occupied in 20th century music by the French composer Erik Satie. For a magazine dedicated to experimental modern music this is an absurd accusation, as Erik Satie is regarded as the father of minimalism.

The fact that he has, as Mr Morton grudgingly admits, "a fair (I) ear for a memorable tune" disguises a lot his rhythmic innovations in a way that never happened with the more angular Stravinsky. Take, for instance, the ballet "Parade", which took place a while before Stravinsky's more famous "Rite of Spring". In the dance of the prestidigitateur chinois there is a section which can be conducted in either three or four. Indeed, the entire of "Parade" is full of the rhythmic innovations which made "The Rite of Spring" as revolutionary as it was.

In a lecture, no less a person than John Cage has accused Beethoven of a huge error in delivering form by harmony rather than, as Satie and Webern did, by duration. It's unfortunate that one early piece should become so overplayed as to obscure the true

picture of a man who laboured long and hard in conditions of unbelievable squalor to bring the human race sublime and important music. Satie's position should be assured by now. He is absolutely vital

Gavin Dell, Glasgow

THE LAST WORD

HOW NICE to see an in-depth coverage of the Jazz Messengers, but how strange to see Tommy Chase mentioned in the same issue.

When Richard Cook says "Tommy Chase has got more mentions in this magazine... than if I'd bought 20,000 copies of Drive", I suspect he means that TC has got more mentions than he really deserves, musically.

Ernie Garsdale's letter says "If Tom doesn't cool it perhaps the guys might become Messengers". But that's about as likely as Tom himself turning into Art Blakey!

As Blakey says on another page, "The kid has talent but he hasn't learned how to play". Are you listening, Tommy?

Mark Dorber, SW6

Who knows? - RC.

BILL AND BERG

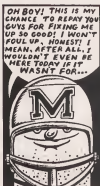
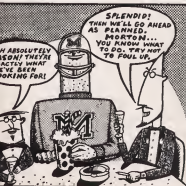
I'M NOT into giggling over details, but here are two suggestions that were stimulated by

two remarks you made in September's Wire. The first is in response to your reference to Bob Berg as "Rollin'ish". Yes, he is at times very punchy and humorous - but he's the closest thing to the Coltrane of *Blue Train* and *Giant Steps* amongst all post-Coltrane tenors, surely?

The other point brings us to the other and - I think - greater tenor and soprano man of recent Miles Davis: Bill Evans. Yes, the full tone of Bechet has certainly made a stylistic mark on jazz soprano - from Roland Kirk and Coltrane through to Steve Lacy; but what of Bill Evans? His solo on "My Man's Gone Now" from *We Want Miles* is as sweet and smooth as the tenor solos on "Kix". And what of John Surman's breathier tone? And Charlie Mariano with Eberhard Weber? They have more of a claim to being recognised as contemporary stylists on soprano, I tell.

Julian Nicholas, York

Fair go on Bob Berg, Julian - I was being a bit lazy there. My remark about Bechet, though, was maybe a little less clear. I was referring to the older order of the jazz tradition - in other words, the music as it stood prior to Lacy's involvement. And while there are plenty of interesting stylists on soprano today, I think the only truly innovative later figures besides Lacy have been Evan Perker and Roscoe Mitchell - RC.



THE Wire



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